

**"GOOD OLD CLYDE": CLYDE CARR M.P., TIMARU AND THE  
ART OF INCUMBENCY, 1928-1962**

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts in History in the University of Canterbury**

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Christchurch, New Zealand 2003**

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## Abstract

This thesis investigates the long incumbency of Clyde Carr, Labour MP for Timaru between 1928 and 1962. Before entering politics, Carr was a minister in the Methodist and Congregationalist Churches, a journalist, an editor, a poet and a radio announcer. He served on the Christchurch City Council from 1922 to 1928. Carr's career is unique in New Zealand parliamentary history as the longest term by a backbench MP in a provincial town seat.

Two approaches are taken to explain Carr's incumbency. Firstly, the historical and social nature of the Timaru electorate is described and compared with nine other provincial town electorates. Timaru was characterised by slow population growth and high levels of unionisation in the period, and both these factors were statistically associated with a high Labour vote in provincial town electorates. The high level of residential segregation in Timaru may also have acted to consolidate Labour support there.

Secondly, Carr's behaviour at his eleven successful election campaigns in the seat is described. Carr's idiosyncratic political style and personal charisma were instrumental in his success in holding the seat, especially at elections where the country as a whole swung away from Labour. Six themes characterise Carr's political thought and behaviour: diligent constituency work, a natural ability to communicate in a wide range of contexts, innovative and active campaigning at elections, a "common touch", frequent involvement in controversy of one kind or another, and good fortune.

## 1. Introduction

In those days, the ferry's arrival times in Lyttelton varied a bit with wind and tides during the voyage. The train to Christchurch – a lot of very elderly carriages – departed when all passengers came off the ship at times that therefore varied a bit. But there was always plenty of time in Christchurch for breakfast in the refreshment room on the platform before the express left for the south. Timaru, Oamaru, Dunedin and Invercargill all had Labour MPs for varying periods of Clyde's time in Timaru.

After 1949, some who had been ministers knew the manager of the refreshment rooms, and struck a special deal with him for a full breakfast on Saturday morning at a giveaway price. All MPs were brought to share in this largesse – except Clyde Carr. He had always boasted of a deal he had with the train guards in their off duty room that had a good fire during the cold winter mornings that prevailed when MPs were going to Wellington. Clyde would continue his Bellamy's pattern of helping himself to extra bread or scones on the ferry – and toast these on a fork over the coal-coke brazier.

His 'pals and colleagues' never told him of the cheap/free deal in the refreshment rooms, letting him scuttle off down to the end of the platform with the guards every Saturday. I think that tells something of a relationship that would not produce votes in a cabinet selection.

- Robert Tizard, former Labour cabinet minister<sup>1</sup>

By no means a household name on New Zealand's political landscape, Clyde Carr was Labour MP for Timaru from 1928 to 1962. He moved to Timaru just before the 1928 election, campaigned hard and, against all expectations, defeated the incumbent MP, Francis Rolleston. Carr went on to win a total of eleven elections in Timaru, retiring in 1962. The short anecdote quoted above is indicative of a number of key aspects of Carr's career and personality. Most obviously, it portrays Carr as an outsider within the parliamentary Labour Party. It also portrays Carr as an eccentric and a penny pincher, and gives some idea of the considerable demands placed on MPs in the age

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Tizard to Colin Brown, 16 February 1996.

before air travel became commonplace. Most significantly, however, it describes a parliamentarian and a man who was as comfortable toasting scones over a coal fire with train guards as breakfasting with his fellow MPs. Carr's greatest political talent was his ability to relate personally with electors from all walks of life. A large part of his personal appeal came from his natural ability to meet people at their own level, and discuss matters relevant to them in their own terms. His highest priority as a politician was always to represent the views and interests of his constituents, even when doing so put him at odds with his own party. He was rewarded for his work with a remarkable political loyalty on the part of the voters of Timaru, who consistently returned him across a thirty-four year period.

Prior to entering parliament, Carr had a varied career, working as a bank clerk, a minister of religion, an editor, a radio presenter and a Christchurch City Councillor. His parliamentary and campaign speeches betrayed a man with a deep love for language and literature. He won the Macmillan Brown Prize for literature in 1926, published a volume of poetry in 1944, and was a voracious reader. Like his one-time friend and associate John A. Lee, Carr was an iconoclast. His interests and activities ranged from religion to radical politics to arcane economic theory to humanitarian internationalism to classical literature to the emerging world of broadcast media.

### **Purpose and structure of thesis**

This thesis aims to explain Carr's long incumbency in Timaru. The investigation began as a biographical investigation into the eventful and sometimes controversial life of this fascinating man. However, a simple biographical narrative, while essential, is not sufficient to explain Carr's success. An individual's character, opinions and beliefs, career prospects and choices, professional failures and successes, are all influenced by the society in which they live. In a fundamental way, the possibilities of an individual's life are limited by their social context. Therefore, historical biography should describe the political and social context inhabited by its subject. With this in mind, the thesis moved away from being a biography of a man *per se*, to being a historical account of the long and faithful relationship between an MP and his electorate.

The philosophical issue of the relative importance of individual agency versus social structure in historical explanation is highly complex but central to all historical inquiry. Keith Sinclair has argued that "the 'life and times' is bastard form of literature" because "history aspires to be social

science; biography aspires to be literature.”<sup>2</sup> According to this rationale, this thesis aspires to be a “bastard form”, as it attempts to integrate truly diverse modes of inquiry and source material. It utilises both mass quantification and intimate character study, but places itself emphatically on the social science side of Sinclair’s social science-literature dichotomy.

This “bastard” approach allows a multi-faceted explanation of Carr’s incumbency. Statistical material is used to explain the forces that shaped his political career, whether or not he was conscious of them at the time. Sinclair’s objection to including social context in biography is that it can weigh down a biographical narrative with unnecessary information. However, to try to completely separate the life of an individual from its context is as misguided as to pad out a biographical account with tonnes of irrelevant detail. This thesis attempts to blend the personal and the structural by providing a focused analysis of those social factors likely to affect the Labour vote in the Timaru electorate.

A secondary reason for adopting this dual approach to researching Carr’s life was a pragmatic one. There is an absence of key source material on Carr’s personal and political life. None of his correspondence, personal papers, journals or other personal writing survives, if indeed it was ever produced. Equally disappointingly, the minute books of the Timaru Labour Party branches and Labour Representation Committee are not available.<sup>3</sup> By contrast, there is a great amount of statistical data available for the period. Much of this material is collated in the census and aggregated by urban area or borough, making it relatively simple to collect data not only on Timaru, but for all the ten provincial town electorates referred to in the thesis.

The electors of Timaru proved to be remarkably faithful to Carr, and the record shows that he was diligent in his work on their behalf. Many commentators retrospectively explained Carr’s hold on the seat with glibly circular logic, claiming that Carr was able to hold the seat for so long because it was a safe Labour seat. This thesis aims to ascertain to what extent Timaru was inherently a “Labour seat”, and what role Carr’s distinctive personal and political style had to play in his electoral success.

After providing an outline of the structure of the thesis, the rest of the introductory chapter will seek to establish the uniqueness of Carr’s parliamentary career in the history of twentieth century

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<sup>2</sup> Keith Sinclair, “Political Biography in New Zealand,” in *Biography in New Zealand*, ed. Jock Phillips (Wellington: Stout Research Centre, 1985), pp. 32-33.

New Zealand politics by comparing Carr's career with those of other long-serving MPs. The second chapter of the thesis builds a biographical picture of Carr's life prior to entering politics, focusing on his childhood, education and work prior to entering parliament in 1928. It describes his constant brushes with authority and his increasing interest and involvement in labour politics. Chapter three aims to describe the historical, social and demographic context of Carr's incumbency. It begins by giving a background on the twentieth century history of the Timaru electorate, focusing on its industrial and economic development, and the growth of the labour movement there. Next, the chapter describes the electoral geography of Timaru across Carr's period. Lastly, a range of demographic variables are compared with the Labour vote in ten provincial town electorates across the period of Carr's career. The aim of this comparative analysis is to evaluate the extent to which the demographic profile of Timaru indicated that it would vote Labour. The gap between Timaru's inherent propensity for Labour-voting and the level of support that Carr actually received was the measure of his personal and political appeal to his electors. Chapters four and five describe in some detail Carr's political career. These chapters are divided into sections corresponding to each of Carr's election campaigns and various other political and biographical themes. The concluding chapter outlines the political science literature on the issue of incumbency, and assesses the relevance of this literature to Carr's career. Finally, six themes in Carr's life and work are identified. These themes are meant to bring coherence to the diverse strains of Carr's career, and contribute to an explanation of his incumbency.

### **How was Carr's career unique?**

Carr's importance to national affairs was marginal at best. His career is interesting because of the peculiarity of his incumbency: Carr was a backbench MP who held a seat that was neither safely Labour nor safely National. In the context of twentieth century New Zealand parliamentary careers, this was unique. Table 1.1 lists all MPs who served careers of thirty years or more in the New Zealand parliament, not including MPs who first entered the house before 1900, nor MPs who were still sitting in 1984.

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<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, the minute books of the Timaru branch of the Labour Party are missing. However, Michael Bassett has kindly allowed use of his own notes taken from the Timaru Branch minutes in the 1960s.



Table 1.1: Long-serving MPs in New Zealand Parliament<sup>4</sup>

Name	Party(ies)	Electorate(s)	Term(s)	Total length of term(s)	Highest political office
Atmore, Harry	Liberal, Independent	Nelson	1911-1914, 1919-1946	30	Cabinet Minister
Carr, Clyde	Labour	Timaru	1928-1962	34	
Coates, Joseph	Reform, National	Kaipara	1911-1943	32	Prime Minister
Field, William	Reform	Otaki	1900-1911, 1914-1935	32	
Forbes, George	Liberal, United	Hurunui	1908-1943	32	Prime Minister
Fraser, Peter	Labour	Wellington Central, Brooklyn	1918-1950	32	Prime Minister
Freer, Warren	Labour	Mt Albert	1947-1981	34	Cabinet Minister
Holyoake, Keith	Reform, National	Motueka, Pahiatua	1932-1938, 1943-1977	40	Prime Minister
Macfarlane, Robert	Labour	Christchurch South, Christchurch Central	1939-1946, 1946-1969	30	Speaker of the House
Mason, Henry	Labour	Eden, Auckland Suburbs, Waitakere, New Lynn	1928-1966	40	Cabinet Minister
Nash, Walter	Labour	Hutt	1929-1968	40	Prime Minister
Ngata, Apirana	Liberal, United, National	Eastern Maori	1905-1943	38	Cabinet Minister
Nordmeyer, Arnold	Labour	Oamaru, Brooklyn, Island Bay	1935-1949, 1951-1969	32	Cabinet Minister
Parry, William	Labour	Auckland Central, Arch Hill	1919-1951	32	Cabinet Minister

Five out of fourteen politicians on this list were Prime Ministers, six were cabinet ministers and one was Speaker of the House. So, the first characteristic that makes Carr's name stand out on this list is his low rank in terms of the party and parliamentary hierarchies. He is one of only three MPs on the list who did not serve in cabinet. The local electoral benefits of holding a cabinet position are fairly obvious: firstly, cabinet ministers receive a high level of visibility as a result of their public profile. Secondly, ministers have the advantage of increased status and influence within their party and parliament, which makes them appealing candidates for their electors. The second

<sup>4</sup> Data taken from J.O. Wilson, *New Zealand Parliamentary Record, 1840-1984*, 4th ed. (Wellington: Government Printer, 1985), pp. 179-247.

point that makes Carr stand out on this list is the nature of the electorate he served. Only three of the MPs here represented electorates that cannot be considered by their nature “safe” for one of the two major parties. Coates, Field, Forbes and Holyoake all represented rural electorates, seats which consistently returned conservative candidates. On the other hand, Fraser, Freer, Macfarlane, Mason, Nash, Nordmeyer and Parry represented city seats with large working-class populations, the Labour Party’s traditional constituency. Apirana Ngata represented a Maori electorate, and was held in enormously high personal regard by Maori electors.

The two remaining MPs, Harry Atmore and Carr, represented provincial town seats. The provincial town seats ranged across the full spectrum of voting behaviour and therefore do not constitute a “safe” category of electorate. Clearly, Atmore’s career provides an important and interesting point of comparison with Carr’s. There are a number of points that differentiate Carr and Atmore’s careers, however. Firstly, Carr held Timaru in eleven consecutive elections for the same party. On the other hand, Atmore was temporarily ousted for a term in 1914, and during the course of his career, largely avoided aligning himself with any political party. For most of his career he sat in parliament as an independent, and his status as an independent helped to create the perception that his interests lay with his electorate rather than with a political party.

By contrast, one of the most remarkable aspects of Carr’s win in 1928 was his status as an outsider to the electorate. He had never lived in Timaru before moving there to fight the 1928 campaign, nor did he have any family connections to the town. A strong family or personal commitment to the community, or a history of involvement in local politics, certainly help explain cases of long incumbency. Harry Atmore was born, educated and went into business in Nelson. Furthermore, he represented the town on the rugby field, was well known in the town for his glass and gold work on various buildings, and later for his extensive personal library. Before he became an MP, Atmore was involved in local politics as a member of the Education Board, the City Council and the Licensing Committee. During his career, Atmore developed a reputation as a generous local MP who “worked for all Nelsonians without party bias, with such a commitment that his constituents regarded him as a personal friend.”<sup>5</sup> Atmore’s career can therefore be largely explained by his strong local reputation, high status within parliament (he served as Minister of Education under Ward and Forbes) and his pragmatic approach to party politics.

Carr is therefore a member of two minority groups among long-serving New Zealand MPs: those who never served as a cabinet minister and those representing electorates that did not fall into a traditionally safe category. It is this fact that makes Carr's career unique. There is no immediately obvious explanation for Carr's long incumbency, as there are for the other long-term MPs on the table.

It is the object of this thesis to explain the phenomena of Carr's incumbency with reference to both his actions as a politician and the demographic characteristics of the Timaru electorate. In so doing, the thesis will distinguish between two types of factors: the intentional and the structural. Intentional factors are those that relate to an individual's conscious behaviour. Elements of Carr's behaviour which are relevant to the explanation of his electoral success include the vigour of his campaigning, his efficacy in securing central government funding for schools and amenities in Timaru, and his willingness to involve himself in the life of the community. Structural factors operate over longer periods of time and are out of the control of the individual. Such factors include nationwide swings in support for the major political parties, and demographic and economic change within the electorate. Structural factors are less likely to be recorded by contemporary observers, and it is chiefly through the use of large-scale quantitative data from official statistical records that the effect of these factors can be identified and assessed. The examination of structural factors lends itself to comparative analysis of compatible cases. Timaru electorate falls into the natural group of ten comparable provincial town seats: Gisborne, Hamilton, Hastings, Invercargill, Napier, Nelson, New Plymouth, Palmerston North, Timaru and Wanganui. In the concluding chapter of this thesis, the two modes of explanation are integrated to describe the close and stable "fit" between the nature of the electorate and the personality and behaviour of the man.

Finally, a note on the secondary literature on Carr. Carr's name appears in works of New Zealand history for a number of different reasons. These reasons range from his nomination for the party leadership in 1940, to references to his poetry, or to one parliamentary speech or other. It is important to note, however, that Carr rates only a brief mention in these texts. The only two substantial pieces of writing on Carr are Colin Brown's entry in the *Dictionary of New Zealand*

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<sup>5</sup> Shirley Tunnicliff, "Atmore, Harry 1870-1946," in *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography Volume Four*

*Biography* and Carr's autobiographical piece in *Politicalities*. Because there is no tradition of debate about Carr's life and work, there is no need at this point for a lengthy discussion on the historiography surrounding him. Instead, where Carr is mentioned in a secondary text, this will be integrated into the general biographical narrative.

## 2. “All things by turn and nothing long”: Carr’s life before politics, 1886 to 1928.

“All things by turn and nothing long” – that has been the record of the subject of this sketch. But one does see life. Sticking to one’s last needs only a bit of cobbler’s wax anyway and is a monotonous occupation for a man who loves change and variety.

- Clyde Carr’s description of his own career<sup>1</sup>

### Childhood

Clyde Carr’s father, Thomas Carr, was born in 1846 in Eastwood, Nottinghamshire. As a Wesleyan minister, he travelled to New Zealand in 1873 and began work, marrying Matilda Thorne in 1876. Matilda’s father, William, had been on the personal staff of British Resident James Busby after his arrival in New Zealand in 1842.<sup>2</sup> Clyde remained proud of his family’s heritage in New Zealand, and frequently referred to William Thorne’s close association with James Busby, claiming that it was his maternal grandfather who had sharpened the axe with which Hone Heke cut down the flagpole at Kororareka.<sup>3</sup> Clyde was born to Thomas and Matilda ten years after their marriage, on 14 January 1886 in Ponsonby, Auckland.

As the young family of a Wesleyan missionary, the Carrs were required to move around the country constantly.<sup>4</sup> While this lifestyle must have been disruptive for the young Clyde, it allowed him to see and experience life the length and breadth of the country, and he developed into an outgoing, personable child. His parents’ professional commitment to the church and willingness to uproot the family on a regular basis left a lasting impression on him. Later, in *Politicalities*, Carr described his own childhood (referring to himself in the third person) “...our friend has known the doubtful joys of the gypsy life, and wanderlust is in his bones.”<sup>5</sup> Another result of the family’s

<sup>1</sup> Clyde Carr, *Politicalities* (Wellington: National Magazines, 1936), p. 71.

<sup>2</sup> *Timaru Post*, 28 November 1935.

<sup>3</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 19 September 1962.

<sup>4</sup> *Who’s Who* gives a detailed description of Thomas and the family’s movements. They were stationed at Wangaroa North from 1873 until 1875, Gisborne from 1875 to 1876; Balclutha 1876-9; Blenheim 1879-82; Cambridge 1882-3; Three King’s Theological College 1883-1886; Grafton Rd 1886-8; Hamilton 1888-90; Franklin 1890-3; Hutt 1893-9; Rangiora 1899-1903; Richmond 1903-6; Hastings 1906-9; Birkenhead 1909-13; and Waihi 1913-5. *Who’s Who in New Zealand*, 2nd ed. (1925), p. 39.

<sup>5</sup> Carr, *Politicalities*, p. 71.

constant movement was that Carr attended schools all over the country. He went to primary schools in Pukekohe, Hutt, Rangiora, and Richmond, and attended secondary school in Nelson. In later life at least, Carr wrote about himself as a disruptive “bad boy” at school, but he seems to have had a great deal of respect and admiration for some of his teachers there.<sup>6</sup>

The influence of this early period in Carr’s life manifested itself in his later careers both as a clergyman and as a politician with a special interest in education and issues affecting young people. Carr’s willingness in 1928 to travel to an unfamiliar electorate to stand for parliament was informed by his experience, both as a the child of a minister and as a minister himself, of travelling in order to promote his beliefs.

After four years of secondary school, Carr worked as a clerk for the Bank of New South Wales for four years. He later described the work as “penal servitude... the work was hard, the routine uncongenial, and the hours were long. Indeed, the local institution was known as ‘lighthouse.’” After leaving the bank, Carr spent a year “‘baching’ with a dozen boon companions” after his parents had moved away from Nelson to Hawkes Bay. He then spent another year working as a cashier, ledger-keeper and confidential clerk in a softgoods store, a job which involved “long hours and dreary routine.”<sup>7</sup> Now in his early twenties, Carr’s lack of obvious direction or career must have been disappointing for his parents.

## The Church

Some combination of his own disillusionment with office work and parental disapproval at his lack of career and bachelor lifestyle lead Carr to take up a position as a home missionary in the Methodist Church. In 1908, Carr was posted to the Home Mission Station at Ashurst near Palmerston North. At this time his father was also ministering in the Rangitikei district. For eighteen months, Carr was the “white haired boy of the dear old ladies of the congregation” at Pohangina, Ashurst and Stoney Creek.<sup>8</sup> He seems to have been well-liked by his congregations, as the report in the *Outlook* on the occasion of his departure demonstrates:

At both the Ashurst evening service... and a farewell social held on Thursday evening, the church was filled to overflowing, and the occasion will long be remembered by those

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<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*

present. At the latter Mr Percy Green, secretary of the Bible Class, presented Mr Carr, as leader, with a beautiful illuminated address, on behalf of the congregation and choir, with another purse of sovereigns.... Visitors were present from all around the district.<sup>9</sup>

After his successful work as a home missionary, Carr decided to train as a minister, and spent three years at the Methodist Theological College in Auckland. While at the College, Carr attended university also.<sup>10</sup> In *Politicalities*, Carr was typically diffident about his work ethic while studying (once again, referring to himself in the third person): "...even though he spent a further two years at other of our University colleges, he was usually more congenially and perhaps more profitably employed sketching his class-mates, making odes to the sunset or sonnets to his mistress' eyebrow than listening to the drip, drip of dreary lectures."<sup>11</sup> Carr's dislike for authority was beginning to show itself. His blasé attitude towards study did not pay off for him, however, and he never completed a degree.

Carr entered the Methodist ministry in 1912 at the age of twenty-six. While performing the customary probationary period for a new Minister, he was stationed at Kilbirnie in Wellington until 1913, then in 1914 he transferred back to Ashurst for a year.<sup>12</sup> Following an interest in overseas missionary work, in 1915 Carr travelled to New South Wales for training. All his life, Carr claimed to have been ordained as a Methodist Minister in 1915.<sup>13</sup> However, it is unclear if he was ever actually ordained as a full minister, as Methodist records make no mention of his full formal ordination. They do, however, describe him being received into the N.S.W. Conference as "Minister or Preacher on trial" and appointed to Nasouri district, part of the Indian Mission at Suva, Fiji.

While working in Fiji, Carr married Laurel (Laurie) Gascoigne on 12 August 1915 at Suva. Laurie was born 19 February 1887 in Halcombe in Manawatu, the daughter of Sarah Child and

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<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Outlook*, 1 May 1909.

<sup>10</sup> F.R.V. Milne (Student Records Manager, University of Auckland) to Colin Brown, 5 March 1996; and Ruth Carruthers (Special Projects Officer, New Zealand Vice Chancellors' Committee) to Colin Brown, 21 February 1996. Carr studied at Auckland University College for the years 1910 and 1911 studying English, Latin and Science. He then transferred to Victoria College in 1912. The only year he sat examinations was 1913, in Latin, English and (Natural) Science. There is no record that he completed a degree.

<sup>11</sup> Carr, *Politicalities*, p. 72.

<sup>12</sup> Details of Carr's career in the Methodist Church are taken from *Methodist Church of Australasia in New Zealand : Minutes of the Annual Conference*, 1908, 1909, 1910, 1911, 1912, 1913, 1914 and 1915.

<sup>13</sup> For example, *Timaru Post*, 28 November 1935.

George Gascoigne.<sup>14</sup> The couple remained married for forty-six years until Laurie's death in 1961. In January 1916, a few months after their marriage, Carr resigned from the Church.<sup>15</sup> In *Politicalities*, Carr offers frustratingly few clues as to the reasons for his resignation, simply saying that he became "ineligible for a promised two-year period of further training in India, [and] returned to New Zealand and joined the Congregationalists."<sup>16</sup> One possible explanation for his resignation was that he married while still on probation and without the permission of the church. This would have been serious enough a transgression for the church to censure him, and possibly demand his resignation.<sup>17</sup>

Returning to New Zealand from Fiji, Carr joined the Congregationalist Church. He began his ministry in June 1916 at the Congregational Church in Auckland.<sup>18</sup> He must have been very conscientious, because within a year he was appointed chair of the Auckland district of the church.<sup>19</sup> This was Carr's first taste of involvement in administration. By 1919, he had resigned the charge at Newton was ministering in Maungaturoto in Northland. In 1920, Carr moved to Christchurch to take charge of the Congregationalist Church in Linwood and became chair of the Canterbury district.<sup>20</sup> For the next four years, according to the yearbook reports, Carr did an admirable job of leading the church: "by the blessing of God and the remarkable energy and undoubted ability of our minister, [there have been] encouraging symptoms of progress. The Rev Clyde Carr has now been with us over 12 months. He has been loyally supported by the members."<sup>21</sup> Carr attended university again at this time, but did not complete a degree.<sup>22</sup> Clyde and

<sup>14</sup> Certificate of Marriage, Registrar General's Office, Suva, Fiji. Reference 149554.

<sup>15</sup> Marcia Baker (Methodist Church of New Zealand) to Colin Brown, 26 January 1996. Methodist Church circuit appointment records on Carr simply state that he resigned in 1916.

<sup>16</sup> Carr, *Politicalities*, p. 72.

<sup>17</sup> Lillian MacDonald (Librarian/Archivist, Uniting Church in Australia New South Wales Synod Church Records and Historical Society) to Colin Brown, 5 March 1996. According to MacDonald, "I think it likely that [Carr's] marriage in Fiji (August 1915) during his first and only appointment there - and while still within the customary period of probation - probably had some bearing on his premature resignation. Even thirty years later such action demanded censure. Although I have no proof, I could well believe that Carr's married status made him ineligible for further missionary training in India."

<sup>18</sup> Details of Carr's career in Congregationalist Church are taken from *Congregational Union of New Zealand Annual Report*, 1917, 1918, 1919, 1920, 1921, 1922, 1923 and 1924.

<sup>19</sup> *Who's Who in New Zealand*, 4th ed. (1941), p. 101.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Congregational Union Annual Report*, 1921, p. 25.

<sup>22</sup> M. Sykes (Administrative Assistant for Academic Registrar, University of Canterbury) to Colin Brown, 24 January 1996. Carr was admitted to the Canterbury University College in April 1921, and took Philosophy and Latin.



Laurie had a son, Rae, in 1918 and a daughter, Dianne (baptised Betty), in 1920. A third child, a daughter, was still born.<sup>23</sup>

Then, on 3 February 1924, Carr resigned from the Linwood Church. The reasons for Carr's resignation from the Congregationalists are not exactly clear, although the Linwood Church report of that year suggests that there had been a fairly major dispute within the church: "this Church has been passing through a most remarkable experience during the past year, the resignation of the majority of the office bearers and their non-attendance at the Church service caused grave anxiety to those who take a deep and keen interest in the Church's future life."<sup>24</sup> There is further reference to the circumstances surrounding Carr's sudden and unexplained resignation in J.B. Chambers' history of Congregationalism in New Zealand, *A Peculiar People*, which refers to Carr (though not by name) saying, "after [the resignation of Carr's predecessor at Linwood, Rev I. Sarginson]... there were further ministers, one being very unfortunate, resulting in the resignation of the office bearers who also refused to attend church services."<sup>25</sup> Carr himself makes the most explicit reference to the causes of this resignation *en masse*: "he joined the Labour movement and began in his preaching to apply Christian principles to problems of life and labour, so much to the chagrin of his church committee that they resigned in a body."<sup>26</sup> That an uncompromising radicalism was creeping into Carr's preaching is also suggested by a quotation from one of Carr's Linwood sermons from May 1923: "Matters economic and social are approaching a crisis. Will it really mean a class war? That depends on the manner and spirit in which the world responds to Labour's just demands."<sup>27</sup> Carr's political radicalism seems to be the best explanation for his resignation, although there is little direct documentary evidence for it.

Despite the somewhat ignominious end to his career in the clergy, Carr held on to the honorific "Reverend" throughout his life. He always insisted on being addressed as Reverend in parliament. Timaru resident R.A. White believed that Carr held onto the title to "sustain his image as a man of high ethics and principle."<sup>28</sup> For a period, once every session, Carr would make a ceremonial

<sup>23</sup> Rae Carr to Colin Brown, 26 February, 1996. Later, Clyde and Laurie adopted their grandson, Robin, who was born to Dianne out of wedlock in 1947.

<sup>24</sup> *Congregational Union Annual Report*, 1924, pp. 38-39.

<sup>25</sup> J.B. Chambers, *"A Peculiar People": Congregationalism in New Zealand 1840-1984* (Wellington: Congregational Union of New Zealand, 1984), p. 84.

<sup>26</sup> Carr, *Politicalities*, p. 73.

<sup>27</sup> Quoted in Bruce Brown, *The Rise of New Zealand Labour: A History of the New Zealand Labour Party from 1916 to 1940* (Wellington: Price Milburn, 1962), p. 60.

<sup>28</sup> R.A. White to Stephen Kerr, 8 March 2001.

appearance in parliament dressed in a long black evening coat and a clerical collar.<sup>29</sup> The clerical title and garb provided a means of bestowing upon himself a respectability and status that he may have not otherwise have demanded. Furthermore, Carr's ability to relate to a wide range of people and integrate himself into the life of the community, and his abilities as an entertaining and effective public speaker, were largely developed during in his time in the church. Carr's experience as a minister remained a defining influence on his career in politics.

## Entry Into Politics

In the period after his resignation from Linwood Church, Carr pursued a career in writing and editing, and became increasingly involved with the labour movement in Christchurch. He worked for some time as an assistant editor at Whitcombe and Tombs Limited, writing and revising many educational and other publications and collecting material for the *Treasury of New Zealand Verse*. In 1925 and 1926 he was managing editor at Andrews, Baty and Co Limited.<sup>30</sup> This period saw the beginning of Carr's own literary career, when he won the Macmillan Brown Prize for literature for his theological essay "The Everest of the Spirit," a verbose theological tract based around the metaphor of mountaineering as the noble but difficult struggle to be virtuous.<sup>31</sup> Carr continued to write throughout his career in parliament, publishing a great number of poems in the Australian magazine, *Aussie* in 1928 and 1929. While never destined for fame as a poet, Carr did have his patriotic ode "Aotearoa" set to music and broadcast on 2YA in Wellington.<sup>32</sup> In 1944, the Progressive Publishing Society published a book of Carr's poetry, entitled simply enough, *Poems*.<sup>33</sup>

Meanwhile, the same passion for politics and activism that had caused Carr trouble at Linwood Church saw him becoming increasingly involved in local labour politics. Carr had first become involved with the Labour Party while still at Linwood, working as the chairman of committees for Daniel Sullivan's successful second election campaign in 1922.<sup>34</sup> In 1923, Carr was elected to the Christchurch City Council, where he served as part of a strong Labour minority on council which included future mayor of Christchurch and Labour Party president Rev J.K. Archer, Labour MPs

<sup>29</sup> *Auckland Star*, 30 April 1962.

<sup>30</sup> Carr, *Politicalities*, p. 73.

<sup>31</sup> Clyde Carr, *The Everest of the Spirit* (Christchurch: Christchurch Press Printers, 1926).

<sup>32</sup> *Timaru Post*, 28 November 1935.

<sup>33</sup> Clyde Carr, *Poems* (Wellington: Progressive Publishing Society, 1944).

<sup>34</sup> *Press*, 15 November 1928.

H.T. Armstrong and E.J. Howard, and future Labour MP Mrs E.R. McCombs.<sup>35</sup> The Christchurch City Council was the most Labour-oriented of local bodies in New Zealand at this time, and Carr's experience on it provided him with not only an introduction to politics, but the formative experience of being part of a politically ascendant Labour team. Carr set his heart on joining some of his fellow Labour councillors into parliament, unsuccessfully seeking the Labour candidature for the Kaiapoi, Riccarton and Ellesmere electorates in 1925.<sup>36</sup> Carr was reelected to the Christchurch City Council in 1925 and 1927, eventually standing down when he won the Timaru seat in 1928.

In 1927, Labour won a majority on the Christchurch City Council, with eleven Labour members out of sixteen, Archer was elected mayor. Archer was succeeded by Sullivan as mayor in 1931, and the latter served until 1936 when he decided that holding a cabinet position as well as a mayoralty was inappropriate.<sup>37</sup> Both Archer and Sullivan were important early influences on Carr's political career. Like Carr, Archer had become involved in Labour politics through the church. A passionate socialist, Archer remained strongly socially committed and active within the Baptist Church throughout his life, standing unsuccessfully for parliament on four occasions.<sup>38</sup> Sullivan, on the other hand, became involved in labour politics through the union movement. He won Avon for Labour in 1919, and represented the seat until his death in 1947. He ranked highly in cabinet under both Savage and Fraser.<sup>39</sup> Upon Archer's death in 1949, Carr spoke in parliament at some length, describing his experience of local body politics and acknowledging the role of both Archer and Sullivan in sparking his interest in politics.<sup>40</sup>

Aside from his editing work and the beginnings of his political career, the most noteworthy of Carr's jobs in this period was his role as an announcer on 3YA. Carr drew upon his experience of public speaking when he applied for the position of announcer on the new radio station in Christchurch in May 1927. Carr's abilities must have been impressive, as he beat seventy-two

<sup>35</sup> *Christchurch City Council Yearbook*, 1923 and 1924.

<sup>36</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 10 November 1928.

<sup>37</sup> Jacinta Clark, "Labour Party Politics in Local Government : A Case Study of the Christchurch City Council" (Master of Arts, University of Canterbury, 1981), pp. 19-20.

<sup>38</sup> Barry Gustafson, "Archer, John Kendrick 1865-1949," in *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Volume Three (1901-1920)* (Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs, 1996), pp. 16-17.

<sup>39</sup> James Watson, "Sullivan, Daniel Giles 1882-1947," in *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Volume Four (1921-1940)* (Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs, 1998), pp. 503-505.

<sup>40</sup> *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 286, 3 August 1949.

other applicants to win the job.<sup>41</sup> Carr became one of only four radio announcers in the country, one in each of the main centres. While the other announcers from this time stayed with the Radio Broadcasting Corporation and pursued careers in broadcasting, Carr was very unhappy with his employment conditions at the station and left under a cloud of controversy after just sixteen months in the job. As a parting shot, Carr anonymously contributed a long article to the *New Zealand Truth* of October 1928, in which he accused the R.B.C. of exploiting its employees, of being cultural philistines and of ignoring the wishes of its listenership. In the article, Carr referred in some detail to specific disputes that he had had with his employers over reimbursement of expenses and other working conditions.<sup>42</sup>

The dispute returned to haunt Carr less than a month later during his first election campaign. The general manager of the R.B.C. wrote to Francis Rolleston, the Reform candidate in Timaru. The letter was intended to provide Rolleston with campaign ammunition, describing the poor working relationship between Carr and the R.B.C., and claiming that Carr was suspended from 3YA after refusing to appear at work on a Saturday afternoon: "to our mind, it was the climax to a hostile attitude that the man had taken up and the very unreliable service he had given since his joining the Company, and which appears to characterise the man himself."<sup>43</sup> A small article in the *Auckland Star* on the occasion of Carr's retirement shed more light on the reasons behind Carr's departure from the R.B.C. According to the article, when Carr read the news on the radio there was never a dull moment, because "instead of giving a factual or objective account of the news, it was his habit to comment on it. This brought him into conflict with the A.R. Harris Company, which ran the station, and it wasn't surprising when he parted company with radio."<sup>44</sup>

Carr's role as announcer with the R.B.C. was the last job he held before deciding to seek nomination for the Timaru seat. Carr was one of two nominees for the 1928 candidacy for Timaru, the other being Fred Cooke, and on 11 August 1928, Carr was selected.<sup>45</sup> Carr's decision to stand in Timaru completed his progression from an interest preaching the "social gospel" to his congregations, to an involvement in local body politics, to an involvement in politics at the

<sup>41</sup> John Herbert Hall, *The History of Broadcasting in New Zealand 1920-1954* (Wellington: Broadcasting Corporation of New Zealand, 1980), p. 27.

<sup>42</sup> *New Zealand Truth*, 25 October 1928.

<sup>43</sup> General Manager of Radio Broadcasting Corporation of New Zealand to F.J. Rolleston, 2 November 1928. Item 79, Folder 10, F.J. Rolleston Papers, Canterbury Museum, Christchurch.

<sup>44</sup> *Auckland Star*, 30 April 1962.

<sup>45</sup> Minutes of National Executive of New Zealand Labour Party, 23 August 1928. In New Zealand Labour Party Head Office, Wellington.

national level. During his time in Christchurch, Carr had shifted his attention from the spiritual realm to the political. This process reflected both the influence of Archer, and the increasing inequalities of wealth that Carr witnessed as the country slipped into depression. By 1928, Carr saw Christianity and labour politics as inseparable, and decided to devote himself to politics. However, the same radicalism that had fueled Carr's growing commitment to labour politics had also brought his career as a clergyman (and possibly also as a radio announcer) to an end. After his dismissal from the Methodist and Congregational Churches and the R.B.C., Carr's career options were limited. As he left Christchurch for Timaru to oppose Rolleston, a senior cabinet minister with an enormous majority, Carr must have wondered what he would do next should his campaign be unsuccessful.

### 3. “All the amenities of a city”: the nature of the Timaru electorate

Timaru is essentially a sound and progressive town. It possesses all the amenities of a city...<sup>1</sup>

This chapter aims to describe the historical and social context of Carr’s political career in Timaru. It begins by giving a brief overview of the history of Timaru, focusing on the agricultural foundations of the South Canterbury economy and the emergence of political labour in Timaru. Next, the electoral geography of Timaru is described. Electoral results in Timaru polling booths across Carr’s term have been collated and classified in order to uncover the geographical bases of support for Labour in the electorate. In the second half of the chapter, a detailed comparative analysis is performed between Timaru and nine other provincial town electorates which are fundamentally similar in size and structure. The comparative analysis focuses on a number of social variables which may be expected to affect the strength of the Labour vote in these towns. The social variables are: rate of population growth, level of unionisation, religious affiliation and rate of home ownership. The combination of a general history and a detailed comparative analysis is intended to build an accurate picture of those aspects of Timaru’s social structure which affected the electorate’s propensity to vote Labour.

#### Population Growth and Economic Development

The area known today as South Canterbury was first inhabited by Ngatimamoe from around 1500. Ngai Tahu invaded and settled the area around 1600, and the Maori who were established in the area when the first Europeans arrived were of that iwi. As the southernmost point at which kumara could be grown, the area was not an enormously attractive one for Maori. It was perhaps for this

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<sup>1</sup> Quote taken from a publicity brochure issued by Timaru Borough Council for the New Zealand Centennial: Hector Matheson, *Timaru : South Canterbury : New Zealand* (Timaru: 1940).

reason, that the area was comparatively sparsely populated when the first Pakeha arrived. The Maori census of 1861 counted only ninety-nine Maori in South Canterbury.<sup>2</sup>

The early 1840s saw the first whalers arrive at what is now called Caroline Bay, but Pakeha settlement of South Canterbury did not begin in earnest until the 1850s with the arrival of the Rhodes brothers, who established the first large scale sheep station in the district. Within five years of the Rhodes' arrival, the large flatlands of South Canterbury had been entirely divided up among a few Pakeha settlers, and within ten, the inland MacKenzie country was also settled. The large run-holders made every effort to recreate for themselves the rural lifestyle of the English gentry, and enjoyed a prosperous existence based on wool exports to Britain. Wool prices were unstable, however, and beginning in the late 1860s, the structure of the agrarian economy in the area began to change. As wool prices fell, and the Liberal government introduced policies intended to encourage closer settlement of the land, the large estates began to be replaced by smaller scale farming. The progress of closer settlement was facilitated through improvements to the transport infrastructure of the area, diversification of agriculture products and technological advancements (especially the introduction of refrigerated shipping which allowed the export of lamb meat from the area). By the turn of the century, small-scale mixed farming was predominant on the downs and plains of South Canterbury.<sup>3</sup>

Large scale Pakeha settlement began in 1859, when 120 settlers arrived at Timaru aboard the *Strathallan*. In the following decades, population growth occurred in fits and starts in response to changes in economic circumstance and opportunity in the district. The greatest influx of population into the area occurred not as the result of government sponsored settlement schemes, but as the result of the Otago gold-rush of the 1860s. Between 1861 and 1864, the South Canterbury population doubled with immigrants, mostly from England, Ireland, Scotland and Germany.<sup>4</sup> Population growth in Timaru stagnated at the end of the nineteenth century, and in the fifteen years of recession after 1881, Timaru's population actually fell from 3917 to 3613. After 1896, however, the town grew quickly, the population rising to 11280 by 1911. After this brief period of rapid expansion, growth slowed, and for most of the twentieth century, Timaru lagged

<sup>2</sup> Department of Industries and Commerce, *An Economic Survey of the South Canterbury Region* (Wellington, 1964), p. 10.

<sup>3</sup> T.J. Hearn, "South Canterbury : Some Aspects of the Historical Geography of Agriculture 1851-1901" (Master of Arts, University of Otago, 1971), p. 277.

<sup>4</sup> *Economic Survey of South Canterbury*, p. 17.

behind the national growth rate. In fact, as Table 3.1 shows, Timaru grew more than ten percentage points slower across the period than the combined population of the ten provincial town electorates. This slow growth was the result of both a low birth rate and outward migration to Christchurch and the North Island.<sup>5</sup>

Table 3.1: Population growth in Timaru 1926-1961<sup>6</sup>

	1926 population	1961 population	% increase
Timaru	15168	24821	38.9%
South Island provincial towns	44747	84397	47.0%
North Island provincial towns	107595	215641	50.1%
Total ten provincial towns	152342	300038	49.2%
Total New Zealand	1408139	2414984	41.7%

Throughout the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, agriculture remained the foundation of the Timaru economy. All of the large businesses in the town were based around the processing and transport of agricultural products: the freezing works, woollen mills, flour mills, the port and railways. The presence of these large unionised workplaces produced a strong Labour-voting population in the town. At the same time, the town's economic dependence on farming ensured that there was also a measure of rural conservative political influence within the electorate. In *New Zealand Politics in Action*, Robert Chapman notes that this dichotomy is characteristic of all provincial town electorates, and argues that the "group of large town electorates perform nearest to the New Zealand norm for they contain both the major divisions of New Zealand life."<sup>7</sup>

Historically, sheep-farming had been the dominant activity on South Canterbury farms since the beginning of Pakeha settlement, and, while there was some diversification of agriculture and horticulture over the period, sheep remained at the centre of the regional economy throughout the twentieth century. The introduction of refrigerated shipping in the 1880s allowed the export of sheep meat, and necessitated the establishment of the freezing industry in the area. The two largest workplaces in Timaru were the two freezing works at Smithfield (established in 1883) and Pareora (established in 1904). These two facilities, and the advent of refrigerated shipping at the end of the nineteenth century, underpinned the growth of the South Canterbury region by allowing the full exploitation of its fertile lands and efficient farming techniques through the export of high value

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 25-27.

<sup>6</sup> Data taken from *New Zealand Census of Population and Dwellings, New Zealand Census of Population and Dwellings* (Wellington: New Zealand Department of Statistics).



products to overseas markets. Labour Party records show that there were already 367 Timaru freezing workers affiliated to the party in 1929.<sup>8</sup> The freezing works remained the major employer in the town throughout the period of Carr's term, and the Freezing Workers' Union remained affiliated to the Labour Party across the entire period.

Several woollen mills in South Canterbury were also involved in the processing of sheep products. While the woollen mills were less significant employers of labour than the freezing works, membership of the Woollen Workers' Union grew steadily throughout the post-war period, from 38 members in 1940 to 138 in 1960. The textile industry was also comparatively well represented in Timaru in the post-war period, although there are no records of union membership in the Labour Party conference returns. In 1961, ten out of a national total of 185 textile factories were located in Timaru, and a much greater percentage of Timaru's factory workers were employed in the textile industry than the national average.<sup>9</sup> Woollen mills and freezing works were some of the biggest workplaces in the New Zealand economy in the middle of the twentieth century, at a time when most factories were very small.<sup>10</sup>

While sheep were the most important livestock in South Canterbury, beginning in the nineteenth century there had been a degree of diversification of the agricultural sector. Grain production increased from the 1880s, and South Canterbury became an important wheat growing area. In the town of Timaru, secondary industry developed around the wheat industry. Three flour mills, a biscuit factory and New Zealand's first pasta factory were all established in the town, and were important early employers of labour. As early as 1911, the Bakers' Union was established, and by 1928, the Bakers', Biscuit Employees', and Millers' Unions had all reached a fair size. The Flour Mill Workers' Union was one of the few unions to affiliate to the Labour Party in 1928 (before the introduction of compulsory unionism in 1936), and remained affiliated throughout the period of Carr's career.

Transport necessarily played a key role in the Timaru economy, providing access for South Canterbury's agricultural products to both domestic and offshore markets. The two major employers in the transport sector in Timaru were the railways and the port. Once it affiliated to the

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<sup>7</sup> Robert Chapman, Keith Jackson, and Austin Mitchell, *New Zealand Politics in Action : The 1960 General Election* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 242.

<sup>8</sup> All data on union membership in Timaru taken from *New Zealand Labour Party Annual Conference Reports*, New Zealand Labour Party Head Office, Wellington.

<sup>9</sup> *Economic Survey of South Canterbury*, p. 161.

Labour Party after the introduction of compulsory unionism, the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants (A.S.R.S.) remained one of the largest unions in Timaru, with a consistent membership of around 250. The Watersiders' Union was far smaller than the A.S.R.S. but was significant as one of the first large unions in Timaru. As early as 1914, it had 161 members. By the late 1940s, membership had fallen substantially, but by 1960 it had risen again to 169.<sup>11</sup> The size of the Watersiders' Union at the beginning of the century indicate its central importance in the early development of the political labour movement. It was also significant as one of the most politically active unions in the period.

Through a quirk of sea currents, the southern breakwater of Timaru Harbour grinds the shingle which is trapped against it into a fine sand. This sand is then carried by currents around the breakwater and is deposited on the sea floor in the harbour, and constant dredging is necessary to maintain access to the harbour. While the high maintenance costs and modest cargo tonnage meant it remained economically marginal, the port became an important part of Timaru's identity. One of the key points of convergence amongst all politicians in the area was the importance of protecting and expanding the port. Ironically, the same build up of sediment that created problems in the maintenance of the port also formed the artificial beach under the cliffs at Caroline Bay, which became one of the country's premium holiday destinations. The annual New Years carnival attracted thousands of visitors and brought considerable revenue to the area.

Despite a concerted effort to establish and attract new industry to the area on the part of politicians and business throughout the twentieth century, such efforts were largely unsuccessful. In the 1960s, most industry in the region had been established in the nineteenth century. An economic survey of South Canterbury conducted by the Department of Industries and Commerce in 1964 found that frozen food, macaroni and linen flax were the only new industries established in Timaru during the twentieth century, and noted that many other industries had closed in that time, including biscuit manufacturing, furniture manufacturing, strawboard manufacturing, and fish liver oil extraction.<sup>12</sup> Counteracting efforts to develop and attract industry to Timaru, was the powerful trend towards the centralisation of manufacturing and shipping in New Zealand to the four main centres. Those industries that Timaru and other provincial towns were able to retain and attract

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<sup>10</sup> J.L. Hewland, "The Nature and Distribution of Manufacturing in New Zealand" (Master of Arts, University of Canterbury, 1948), p. 12.

<sup>11</sup> *N.Z.L.P. Annual Conference Reports*.

were chiefly those involved with the processing of pastoral products. This was because the raw materials in these processes (carcasses, grains, raw milk, wool and so on) were bulky and perishable, and factories needed to be located near the source of the raw materials.<sup>13</sup> Food processing and transport remained the major employers in Timaru in the post-war period.

Figure 3.1: Timaru, c. 1957<sup>14</sup>



<sup>12</sup> *Economic Survey of South Canterbury*, p. 172.

<sup>13</sup> Hewland, "Nature and Distribution of Manufacturing".

<sup>14</sup> South Canterbury Museum Photographic Collection H.T.S. 26/3782.

## Political History

As Table 3.2 shows, Timaru has been dominated by Liberal and Labour MPs since the beginning of the party era in New Zealand politics. The presence of large numbers of unskilled and semi-skilled workers such as those in Timaru's port and freezing works strongly influenced the politics of the electorate in a Labour direction.

Table 3.2: Members of Parliament representing Timaru electorate 1890-2003

Name	Party	Term
William Hall-Jones	Liberal	1890-1908
James Craigie	Liberal	1908-1922
Francis Rolleston	Reform	1922-1928
Clyde Carr	Labour	1928-1962
Basil Arthur	Labour	1962-1987
Maurice McTigue	National	1987-1993
Jim Sutton	Labour	1993-

One of the electorate's most distinguished representatives was William Hall-Jones, who entered Parliament as an independent, and was subsequently invited to join Ballance's Liberal Party. Hall-Jones served as a cabinet minister under Seddon, gaining the opportunity to advance his progressive personal policy concerns: the enfranchisement of women, the introduction of non-contributory government-funded old age pensions and the subdivision of large farming estates into smaller settlements.<sup>15</sup> Upon his retirement from parliament to take up the appointment of high commissioner in London, Hall-Jones was succeeded by another Liberal representative, James Craigie.

It was no coincidence that Hall-Jones was concerned with the "bursting up" of the large estates. Land reform was a central concern of many within the Liberal Party and had a particular relevance to South Canterbury. Dating from the earliest Pakeha settlement, there remained a well-defined social and psychological differentiation between large landholders on one hand and small farmers and urban workers on the other. Much of the land in South Canterbury was held by a small number of wealthy run holders known as "squatters", who became the target of both public resentment and central government legislation aimed at breaking up the large estates. Erik Olssen describes such landowners attempting to emulate the "lifestyle of the English squire.... At the turn of the century

<sup>15</sup> John Hall-Jones, "Hall-Jones, William 1851-1936," in *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography Volume Two (1870-1900)* (Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs, 1993), pp. 188-189.

they could still be found migrating between country house and town club, sending their sons to schools such as Christ's College or even to England for their education, amusing themselves with hunts and balls, and acting as local benefactors and patrons."<sup>16</sup> Throughout his parliamentary career, Carr was assured a certain amount of public sympathy by criticising the wealthy elites of the area. In the town of Timaru itself, large business interests like the stock and station agencies, shipping and meat processing firms and banking and insurance companies, were referred to as the "commercial aristocracy".<sup>17</sup> Perhaps as much as the presence of large industries like the port, freezing works and railways, this heightened and particular class consciousness contributed to the early establishment of the labour movement in Timaru. It may be instructive to conduct further historical investigation into the numbers of large estate owners relative to landless labourers in South Canterbury in comparison to other areas, and the relationship between these patterns and the development of political labour.

Political labour emerged in Timaru relatively early in comparison to the other provincial town seats. In 1908, Timaru was one of just six South Island electorates where a Political Labour League candidate stood. In 1911, Timaru was one of a handful of towns outside the four main centres where the Labour Party stood candidates in the local body and general elections. In 1912 the first New Zealand Labour Party had just nine financial branches, one of which was in Timaru.<sup>18</sup> In 1919, when the second Labour Party fought its first national election, the result in Timaru was encouraging, with Labour candidate Percy Vinnell attracting 40.4 percent of the total vote. While the result gave Liberal incumbent Craigie a healthy 1519 vote majority, Vinnell's share of the vote compared favourably with Labour candidates in other provincial town electorates. Only in Palmerston North and Invercargill did Labour candidates achieve a higher share of the vote at the 1919 election.

Vinnell's share of the Timaru vote leapt up to 48.4 percent in 1922, putting him 288 votes from winning the seat. While he failed to take the seat, losing to future cabinet minister Francis Rolleston, Vinnell's share of the vote was higher than any other Labour candidate in a provincial town seat at the election, including Lewis McIlvride, who won Napier with 38.1 percent of the

<sup>16</sup> Erik Olssen, "Towards a New Society," in *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, ed. B.R. Williams (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 261.

<sup>17</sup> David Johnson, *Timaru and South Canterbury: A Pictorial History* (Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 1996), p. 64.

vote in a three-way contest. If the 1922 result gave the local Labour Party organisation cause for optimism, their hopes were brought down to earth with a crash in 1925. In another straight out contest with Rolleston, Vinnell suffered from the dramatic nationwide swing against Labour. The electorate swung to Reform by 25.4 percent, and Rolleston held the seat with a huge majority of 2486, an increase of 2198 votes over his 1922 majority.

After three successive elections fought by Vinnell, a new candidate was sought for the 1928 election. That new candidate was Carr, and he won the seat in 1928 with a swing back to Labour of equal magnitude to Rolleston's in 1925. Carr went on to win eleven consecutive elections before retiring in 1962. The by-election held after his retirement was won by the Labour candidate, Basil Arthur, who went on to enjoy a lengthy term of twenty-five years before losing to Maurice McTigue in 1987. McTigue held the seat in 1990, but lost it to Labour's Jim Sutton in 1993.

Underpinning the electoral success of Labour in Timaru was the high level of membership of unions affiliated to it within the Timaru Labour Representation Committee (L.R.C.). Members of affiliated unions were required to pay levies to their unions, a proportion of which was fed back in to their local L.R.C. to cover campaign and general operational costs. The support of a large number trade unions was crucial to the growth, financial strength and electoral success of the Labour Party. In Timaru, the key unions up to the mid 1930s were the Waterside Workers' and Freezing Workers' Unions. Other unions in this period were the Engineers' and Drivers' Unions; construction-related unions such as the Bricklayers', Carpenters, Painters', Plasterers' and Plumbers' Unions; and wheat-related unions such as the Millers', Biscuit Employees' and Bakers' Unions. Union membership fell in the mid 1930s as a result of the depression, until Labour's introduction of compulsory unionism (in the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act of 1936) had an enormous impact, both on the membership of the large unions and on the number of new unions which were formed and affiliated to the Labour Party. In 1935, there were 914 members of eight different affiliated unions in Timaru, and by 1937 there were 2935 members in twenty-two different unions. Fees paid to the party by the Timaru unions over the period increased from £27/17/1 to £144/11/0.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Barry Gustafson, *Labour's Path to Political Independence : The Origins and Establishment of the New Zealand Labour Party, 1900-19* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1980), pp. 19, 36-37, 50.

<sup>19</sup> *N.Z.L.P. Annual Conference Reports*.

The numerically dominant unions within the Timaru L.R.C. after the introduction of compulsory unionism were the Freezing Workers', Labourers', Hotel and Restaurant Employees', Workers', Engineers', Drivers' and Watersiders' Unions, and the A.S.R.S. Of these, the Freezing Workers' Union was consistently the largest across the entire period. Capitation from Freezing Workers' Union members was an invaluable source of income for the party, providing between 15 and 25 percent of the total capitation from unions and branches within the Timaru L.R.C. Union levies were not always paid gladly, however, especially during the depression when economic pressure was felt keenly by unskilled and semi-skilled employees of the big works. Letters from Freezing Workers' Union members in 1934 convey the sense of frustration and desperation felt by such men, some of whom had been out of work and in unemployment camps for months before being asked to contribute their union levies:

"...As I have been an inmate in an unemployment camp for 7 months my chances of paying this will be obvious to you..."<sup>20</sup>

"...in Answer to your Final Warning Well Sir I am stiff and if you give me say 3 Weeks more I will guarante [sic] to pay you..."<sup>21</sup>

"I am sorry I could not meet this before but work is scarce and so is money. I have been a financial member of your union for 13 years and as far as Pareora is concerned I am given to understand there is no job for me here so I am surprised at your union for pressing me for a few shillings when times are so bad."<sup>22</sup>

In addition to being the largest unions in the electorate, the Freezing Workers' Unions were also important on account of their political activity. In 1935, union officials from Christchurch travelled to Smithfield and Pareora Freezing Works to organise Alliance of Labour branches.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Walter Sow to H.C. Revell, 21 January 1934. Canterbury Freezing Workers and Related Trades Union Archives, Macmillan Brown Library, Christchurch.

<sup>21</sup> J. O'Leary to H.C. Revell [undated]. Canterbury Freezing Workers and Related Trades Union Archives, Macmillan Brown Library, Christchurch

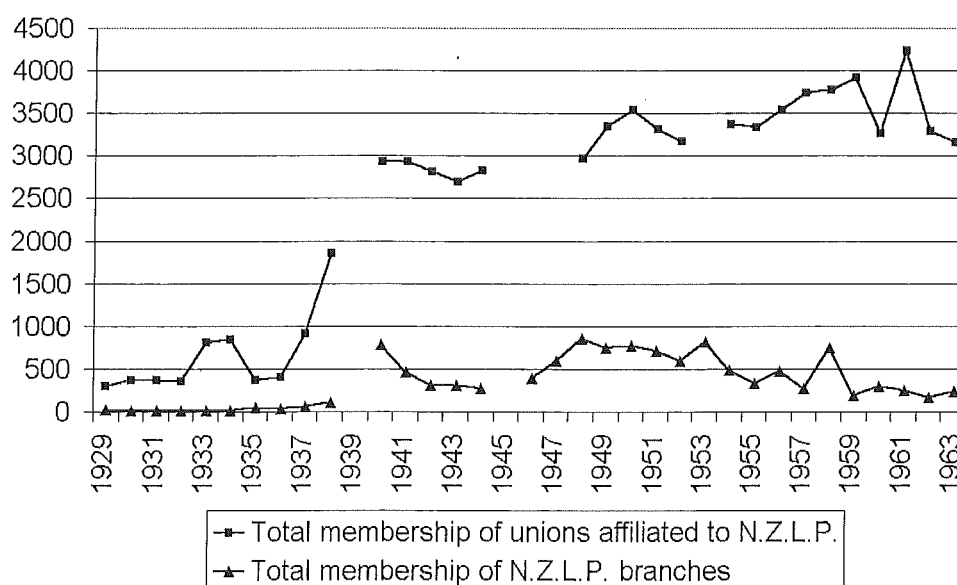
<sup>22</sup> S.M. Creasey to H.C. Revell, 1 February 1934. Canterbury Freezing Workers and Related Trades Union Archives, Macmillan Brown Library, Christchurch

<sup>23</sup> *New Zealand Worker*, 24 November 1935.

Growth in party membership in the late 1930s was even more spectacular than the growth in affiliated union membership. In 1937, there were sixty-four members of the central Timaru branch. By 1940, three more branches had been established, and the total membership had leapt to 781. This enormous increase can not be put down to legislative change in the same way as the increase in union membership, but rather reflects the massive popularity of the first Labour Government. The fact that the new party branches were established in relatively isolated communities close to freezing works is suggestive of the important role of the large unions in fostering support for the party.

The Timaru Federation of Labour minutes show that Carr and the F.O.L. had a fairly close relationship, frequently corresponding over business ranging from minor administrative matters to the issue of regional development and employment. Other than a minor dispute over his involvement with John A. Lee, Carr and the F.O.L. had a good working relationship, the latter frequently expressing its satisfaction and gratitude with the work Carr had done for the electorate.<sup>24</sup> The umbrella organisation through which the party and the unions communicated was the L.R.C. The Timaru L.R.C. was almost always headed by a representative from a union, suggesting industrial labour had a strong influence over the affairs of the local party.<sup>25</sup>

**Graph 3.1: Membership of Labour Party branches and affiliated unions in Timaru 1929-1963<sup>26</sup>**



<sup>24</sup> Timaru Federation of Labour Minutes, MS-Papers-4100-19/13/1-5, New Zealand Federation of Labour Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

<sup>25</sup> *New Zealand Labour Party Journal Golden Jubilee Edition*, April 1966, p. 137.



As graph 3.1 shows, both affiliated union and branch membership in Timaru dropped after 1940 as a result of both the controversy over John A. Lee's expulsion from the Labour Party and the effect of World War Two. Bentley estimates that union membership dropped by fifty thousand nationally between 1938 and 1943, leaving Labour to fight the 1943 election with half the campaign fund it had enjoyed in 1938.<sup>27</sup> After World War Two, however, union and branch membership in Timaru and nationwide began to increase. This increase was reversed in the late 1940s and early 1950s as Labour faced first an internal dispute over conscription then heavy defeat by National at the polls. Nationally, union membership dropped by approximately fifty-one thousand between 1949 and 1952.<sup>28</sup> From the late 1940s, branch membership in Timaru went into decline. A temporary recovery in the wake of Labour's 1957 victory did not survive the backlash against the party in response to the 1958 "black" budget. Affiliated union membership, on the other hand, recovered through the 1950s, and remained fairly stable as a proportion of the voting population. The effects of Lee's expulsion and the 1958 budget on branch and union membership in Timaru are discussed in chapter five.

Other organizations were also instrumental in spreading the influence of left-wing and labour-oriented ideas at a grass-roots level. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s there was a strong Workers' Educational Association in Timaru. Mostly attended by manual workers, the organisation was patronised by over eight hundred men and women in 1936, with activities ranging from public lectures to one-act plays. Most of the subject matter was focused on art and literature appreciation, or economics and international relations. The W.E.A. was affiliated to the Carpenters', General Labourers', Driver and Flour Mill Workers' Unions. By the early 1950s, however, the Timaru W.E.A. had all but petered out.<sup>29</sup>

## **Electoral Geography**

By breaking down election results in Timaru to a polling booth level, much can be learned about the geographical bases of support for each party within the electorate, and how these bases of support changed over time. In order to achieve this, voting results at thirty-one polling booths

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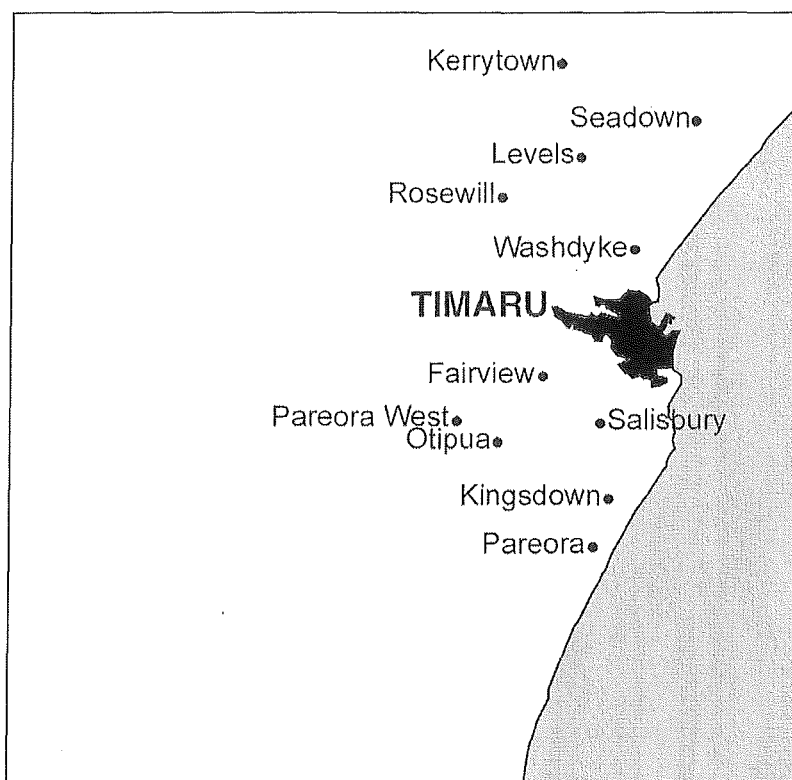
<sup>26</sup> *N.Z.L.P. Annual Conference Reports, 1929-1963.*

<sup>27</sup> T.W. Bentley, "Trade Union Financial Assistance to the New Zealand Labour Party 1930-1960" (Master of Arts, University of Auckland, 1973), pp. 21-24.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, p. 30.

across the period were collated and categorised according to their location and partisanship.<sup>30</sup> Maps 3.1 and 3.2 show that the thirty-one booths fall into two geographical categories. Eleven booths lay outside the borough boundaries in rural areas, and the other twenty were in urban or suburban areas. Appendix one shows voting patterns for each booth during Carr's term.

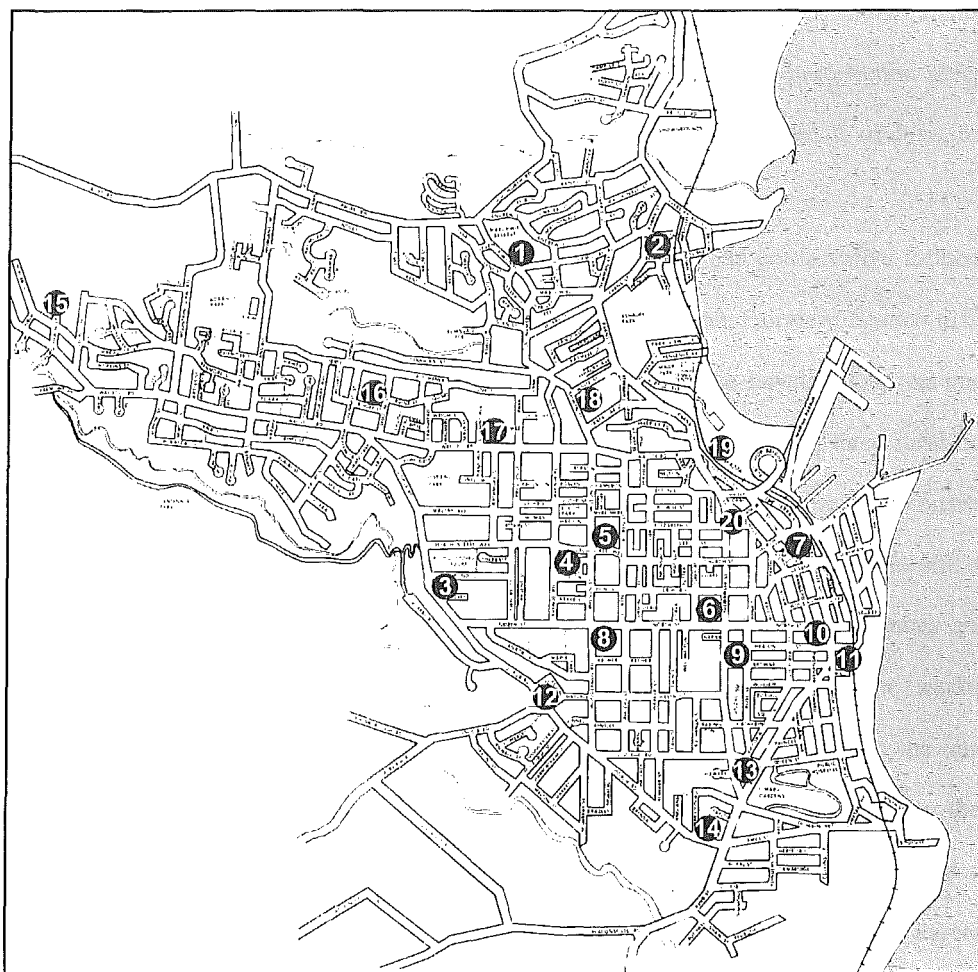
Map 3.1: Locations of rural polling booths within Timaru electorate 1928-1960



<sup>29</sup> Timaru Workers' Educational Association Annual Reports, Macmillan Brown Library, Christchurch.

<sup>30</sup> Locating the booth sites was a difficult task, as the locations used for polling booths changed over the three decades of Carr's term, as did the names used to describe booths in the same location. A complex process of cross referencing the (often frustratingly brief) booth names from newspapers, the *Appendices to the Journal of the House of Representatives* and the *New Zealand Gazette* was necessary to precisely locate and confirm the location of booths. Returns from a handful of booths in the central business district were aggregated into a single category because these booths tended to change location frequently from year to year.

Map 3.2: Locations of suburban polling booths within Timaru electorate 1928-1960



## Labour voting booths:

1. Marchwiell
2. Belfield Hill
3. West Public School
4. Cullmantown
5. Wilson Street
6. Main Public School
7. Central Business District Booths
8. Woodlands Street
9. Browne Street
10. Courthouse
11. High Street
12. Kennedy's Garage
13. South Public School
14. Kensington

## National voting booths:

15. Gleniti
16. Highfield
17. Waiiti Road
18. Waimataitai
19. Bay Hall
20. Elizabeth Street

The rural booths (Fairview, Kerrytown, Kingsdown, Levels, Otipua, Pareora, Pareora West, Rosewill, Salisbury, Seadown, and Washdyke) shared two common characteristics. They were all situated away from the central business district and suburbs, and were generally much smaller than the suburban booths. Pareora West, for example, averaged just 28 votes per election across the period. The two exceptions to this among the rural booths were Pareora and Washdyke, both of which averaged over two-hundred votes per election.

The rural booths overwhelmingly favoured National candidates. The conservative influence of the farmer was all powerful in these areas. At Rosewill, Pareora West, Fairview, Seadown, Otipua and Kingsdown, Carr never won a majority of the votes. He won the Levels booth just once (in 1935), and Salisbury twice (in 1935 and 1943). However, at the remaining three rural booths, Pareora, Washdyke and Kerrytown, Carr was dominant. Pareora, for example, was consistently one of the most strongly Labour-voting booths in the entire electorate. Pareora was the site of one of the region's two major freezing works, and both the strong Labour-voting tendency and the consistently large turnout suggests that it was freezing workers living near the works that dominated voting there. Washdyke, a largely industrial settlement immediately to the north of Timaru was the other consistently Labour-voting rural booth. Once again, it is likely that the population of factory and mill workers there was responsible both for the large turnout and strong Labour orientation. Kerrytown was a much smaller and more remote booth than Pareora or Washdyke, but was also consistently Labour-voting. The presence of a community of labourers, or employees of a dairy factory or similar may have been responsible for voting behaviour there.

The most important point with regard to the rural booths is their relative insignificance to the overall result in Timaru. The combined turnout in these eleven booths was on average slightly less than ten percent of the total electorate vote. Furthermore, between 1946 and 1954, up to nine of these booths at a time were absorbed into the surrounding Waimate electorate as part of the electoral redistribution. Voting returns in the Waimate electorate show that these redistributions worked in Carr's favour. The aggregate result from the booths which had formerly been in the Timaru electorate favoured National by 103 votes in 1946, 142 votes in 1949, 148 votes in 1951 and 89 votes in 1954. While the effect of results was not decisive, Carr was fortunate that they worked in his favour, especially as this was the period of his career in which his majority was at its smallest.

The majority of the votes in Timaru were cast in suburban booths, and the patterns of voting within these booths were also remarkably stable. Map 3.2 shows that all twenty of these booths were located within the boundaries of the Timaru borough in built up, predominantly residential areas. Only six suburban booths (Highfield, Waiti Road, Bay Hall, Waimataitai, Gleniti, and Elizabeth Street) favoured National across the period. Highfield and Waimataitai favoured National by an average margin of over 25 percent over the period. On only two occasions did any of the National-voting suburban booths return a majority for Carr: at Gleniti in 1935 and at Waimataitai in 1938, by fourteen and eleven votes respectively. All six National-voting suburban booths are located along a ridge of raised land running in an east-west direction between the Waimataitai Stream to the north and Otipua Creek to the south, creating a "blue streak" horizontally bisecting the town. The homes along this ridge enjoyed the advantages of altitude - good views and exposure to sun - and were known for their high real estate value.

The other fourteen suburban polling booths voted consistently for Labour. Of these, no less than six (High Street, Brown Street, Kensington, Marchwiell, Belfield Hill and South Public School) returned an average majority for Carr over his career of 25 percent of the total vote cast at that booth. On only two occasions during his term did any of these booths fail to return a majority for Carr: in 1946 at the Courthouse and in 1960 at West Public School, by one vote and five votes respectively. The Labour-voting booths were located predominantly in the southern-central and southern areas of the borough, and in the north. The northern Labour-voting booths were Marchwiell, a post-war state housing suburb that was home to many returned soldiers, and Belfield Hill, located in the immediate vicinity of the Smithfield Freezing Works.<sup>31</sup> The other Labour-voting suburban booths lay to the south of the "blue streak", from West Public School in the west to the central business district in the east, and south to Kensington. It was the southernmost booths (Browne Street, High Street, South Public School and Kensington) that demonstrated the greatest support for Carr over the period.

Since voting returns at the twenty suburban booths accounted for over ninety percent of the total Timaru vote across the period, they are worthy of more detailed investigation. As the graphs in appendix one show, the Labour- and National-voting suburban booths alike were remarkably

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<sup>31</sup> Michael Wilkinson, "The Post-War Growth of Timaru : A Study of the Post-War Growth of Population, Occupational Structure, Surface Area and the Port from 1945 to 1957" (Master of Arts, University of Canterbury, 1958), p. 18.

consistent in their voting preferences. There were no significant shifts in allegiance at any of the booths. This suggests a high degree of residential stability, which may have been a product of the low population growth that Timaru experienced in the period. The fact that each of these booths showed a marked and consistent pattern of voting either for or against Carr across his entire career suggests a fairly high degree of residential segregation in Timaru during this period.<sup>32</sup>

The pronounced geographical separation between National- and Labour-voting areas probably worked in Carr's favour. The political influence of Labour was enhanced by the fact that the majority of the electorate was Labour territory. At any given election, most of the Labour vote was cast in "Labour friendly" booths, that is, booths which were won by Carr by a significant margin election after election. Because such a small area of the town could be considered "National friendly", the majority of the National vote was also cast in Labour friendly booths. Thus, the effect of residential segregation in a Labour-voting electorate may have been to create a kind of solidarity within Labour-voting areas and to prevent a similar sense of community forming between the relatively isolated pockets of National voters. In a study of voting among the working class in Britain, Parkin found that "manual workers are more likely to vote Labour if they live in predominantly working-class areas than if they live in socially heterogeneous ones."<sup>33</sup> Parkin conceives of working-class communities and organisations like trade unions as "normative sub-systems which deviate from the overall [conservative] value system in politically significant ways". Membership of such communities or sub-systems acts like a "protective ring" around the individual voter, shielding her or him from conservative influence and increasing the probability that they will vote for Labour. Strongly Labour-voting areas may also develop a certain immunity against swings away from the party. In their study of voter behaviour in Britain, Butler and Stokes found that there was a tendency for local areas to become homogenous in their political opinions. So, where the Labour party was strong, the effect of a national swing against it was relatively weak. Where Labour was weak, the swing against Labour was amplified.<sup>34</sup>

Interestingly, there is fairly convincing evidence of a parallelism of opinion between the different polling booths, regardless of their overall preferences. In both National- and Labour-voting booths,

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<sup>32</sup> The patterns of support for Labour candidates in Timaru prior to 1928 shows that the core regions of support were in place a decade before his arrival.

<sup>33</sup> Frank Parkin, "Working-Class Conservatives : A Theory of Political Deviance," *British Journal of Sociology* 18, no. 3 (1967), pp. 285-286.

Carr's share of the vote rose through the 1930s to a peak in 1938. Carr's heavy reduction in votes in 1943 when he faced the Democratic Soldiers Labour Party candidate Cresswell, and his relatively weak recovery in 1946, also occurred across all booths. From there, support for Carr dropped to a low point in 1943, recovered slightly, but continued to decline through the late 1940s and early 1950s to its lowest point in 1954. At the 1954 election, Social Credit took more votes from National than Labour across all booths. Carr's share of the vote rose again in 1957, with the drop in Social Credit vote, then fell away slightly in 1960. There was no consistent pattern in the levels of third party vote in 1931, 1943 or 1954.

The electoral geography of Timaru proved to be remarkably stable over Carr's career. The results of the polling booth analysis show that there were distinct areas of strongly Labour- and strongly National-voting booths, and that geographical patterns of voting did not shift significantly over time during Carr's career.

### Comparative Analysis Methodology

In order to understand the social factors effecting the vote in Timaru, it is necessary to place the structural characteristics of the town in a broader context. In Carr's period, Timaru belonged to a group of ten provincial town seats: Gisborne, Hamilton, Hastings, Invercargill, Napier, Nelson, New Plymouth, Palmerston North, Timaru and Wanganui. The comparability of these ten towns has been established in the literature, most notably by Robert Chapman.<sup>35</sup> Chapman referred to these electorates as a "natural group" because of their similar size and because they constitute the second tier of urbanisation in New Zealand. All of the towns were large enough to have their own electorate to themselves, but not so large as to require more than one electorate over their urban area. Chapman described a common social-psychological condition in these towns, which had much in common urban areas, but which were also affected by rural attitudes as the natural result of their economic dependence on the rural sector. He argued that the towns were microcosms of the entire New Zealand electorate, "rurally oriented and urban minded in balance."<sup>36</sup> Voting behaviour in the provincial town electorates was therefore not qualitatively different to the rest of

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<sup>34</sup> David Butler and Donald Stokes, *Political Change in Britain : The Evolution of Electoral Choice*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1974), pp. 130-133.

<sup>35</sup> Chapman, Jackson, and Mitchell, *Politics in Action*, pp. 235-240.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, p. 242.

the country, but in fact served to highlight national trends in voting because of the electorates' economic and demographic representativeness.

In the following sections, four aspects of the demographic composition of the towns are examined in order to determine which of these factors had the strongest influence on the Labour vote. The social factors under investigation are: rate of population growth, level of unionisation, religious affiliation and rate of home ownership. The bivariate correlation analyses were done in Prentice Hall SPSS Version 11.0, using Spearman's correlation coefficient. A bivariate correlation measures how two sets of variables are related. The correlation coefficient is the measure of the strength of the relationship, ranging between  $-1$  (a perfect negative relationship) and  $+1$  (a perfect positive relationship). A value of 0 indicates no linear relationship between the two variables.

Election results were taken from the *Appendices to the Journal of the House of Representatives*. Only the election years after 1931 were included, because the combination of two- and three- way fights at the 1928 election made it impossible to make meaningful comparisons between the different towns. During the period before the formation of the National Party in 1936, there was often more than one candidate representing the Coalition in each electorate. Typically one of the anti-Labour candidates would represent old United Party interests, the other Reform Party interests. For this reason, a number of results from 1931 and 1935 which could not be interpreted as Labour versus conservative were also omitted from the analysis. Those elections where an independent candidate received over twenty-five percent of the vote, or where one of the two highest polling candidates was not representing Labour or the Coalition, were omitted.<sup>37</sup>

The figure used to represent the strength of support for Labour in the analyses is Labour's share of the *vote cast for the two major party candidates* (the "major party vote"), not Labour's share of the *total vote*. It is a moot point as to which of these measures conveys the "true" level of support for the party. In practical terms, however, the number of wins by a Labour candidate is the most significant result, and may therefore be adopted as a benchmark for the level of political support for Labour. Table 3.3 shows the rank orders of the towns using different measures to represent the strength of the Labour vote. As the table shows, the match in rankings between the number of wins by a Labour candidate and Labour's share of *major party vote* is much closer than between the

<sup>37</sup> Invercargill in 1931, and Gisborne, Palmerston North, Wanganui and Invercargill in 1935 were omitted from the analysis. Also, Nelson was omitted up for all elections until 1946, because of the uniquely independent nature of Atmore's term there.



number of wins by a Labour candidate and Labour's share of the *total vote*. This is because when a simple measure of Labour's share of the total vote is used, high-polling third party candidates drag down the share of the vote of the major party candidates in their electorate relative to other electorates. Thus, support for Labour appears lower than its true level in electorates where a third party candidate polled highly. When Labour's share of the major party vote is used, the third party vote is disregarded.

Table 3.3: Different measures of the strength of the Labour Party in ten provincial town electorates 1931-1960

Wins by a Labour candidate	Labour's share of major party vote	Labour's share of total vote
Timaru (10/10)	Napier (56.7%)	Napier (54.4%)
Napier (9/10)	Wanganui (55.0%)	Gisborne (52.6%)
Wanganui (9/10)	Timaru (54.4%)	Timaru (51.7%)
Gisborne (8/10)	Gisborne (54.3%)	Palmerston North (49.7%)
Palmerston North (6/10)	Palmerston North (51.1%)	Hastings (49.5%)
Hastings (6/10)	Hastings (50.9%)	Wanganui (49.3%)
Invercargill (3/10)	Invercargill (48.2%)	Invercargill (46.3%)
Nelson (2/10)	Nelson (48.2%)	Nelson (45.9%)
Hamilton (2/10)	Hamilton (46.3%)	New Plymouth (44.1%)
New Plymouth (1/8)	New Plymouth (45.9%)	Hamilton (43.7%)

As table 3.3 shows, the rank order of all three lists is roughly the same. The top three towns in terms of their Labour vote were Napier, Wanganui and Timaru. At the other extreme, New Plymouth and Hamilton were the strongest National-voting electorates, and the remaining electorates, Gisborne, Palmerston North, Hastings, Invercargill and Nelson sit in the middle. The high third party vote in Wanganui means that it sits too low in the "total vote" column and, conversely, Gisborne is too high. The match in the town rankings between the wins by a Labour candidate column and the major party vote column is very close. In fact, Timaru stands out as the only aberration between the two columns, with Carr's eleven consecutive wins not matched by a consistently high share of the major party vote for Labour in the electorate. Table 3.4 shows that Labour's share of the major party vote in Timaru was relatively high but not the highest among the ten towns over the period of Carr's career.

Table 3.4: Labour's share of the major party vote in ten provincial towns 1931-1960

Electorate	1931	1935	1938	1943	1946	1949	1951	1954	1957	1960
Gisborne	51.8%	58.6%	64.4%	58.4%	57.0%	51.7%	48.9%	51.9%	54.0%	49.0%
Hamilton	30.5%	57.2%	56.8%	48.5%	48.8%	44.1%	41.6%	45.5%	46.1%	40.7%
Hastings	38.7%	54.4%	60.6%	56.8%	51.7%	46.7%	46.3%	50.9%	53.5%	49.0%
Invercargill			57.7%	53.6%	49.2%	46.0%	42.6%	45.8%	47.7%	43.3%
Napier	57.1%	69.3%	66.1%	56.5%	56.7%	52.6%	49.9%	52.4%	57.6%	54.3%
Nelson					47.9%	45.6%	41.2%	47.3%	51.7%	55.8%
New Plymouth	34.0%	46.0%	53.3%	49.8%	48.6%	44.9%	42.1%	45.9%	48.0%	44.8%
Palmerston North	44.7%		57.5%	50.7%	53.4%	48.2%	49.3%	51.2%	54.6%	49.5%
Timaru	54.1%	54.4%	58.9%	57.7%	51.9%	53.0%	52.0%	56.4%	55.7%	51.2%
Wanganui	46.9%		64.7%	61.1%	57.0%	53.7%	50.8%	51.5%	56.1%	50.7%

Data for the social variables used in the correlation analysis were taken from two sources. Firstly, the material on Labour Party branch and affiliated union membership was taken from Labour Party annual conference records held at the Labour Party head office in Wellington. Union membership records from 1946 were incomplete, and therefore could not be included in the analysis. Also, there were no union or branch membership records remaining for Hamilton in 1943 or Hastings in 1949, so those cases were omitted from the analysis. Data relating to the other variables - religious affiliation, population growth, and home ownership - were taken from the census. Despite the various limitations with historical data, there were always at least forty-six cases to use in the correlation analyses.

### Population Growth

There was a fairly large degree of variation between the ten towns during the period in terms of population and population growth. As shown in appendix two, Hamilton and Palmerston North displayed the most spectacular growth, climbing steeply from being two of the smallest towns at the end of the nineteenth century to being the two largest in the post-war period. On the other hand, Timaru, Invercargill, Napier and particularly Nelson showed the slowest growth over the entire the period. Nelson, for example, was the largest of the towns in 1874, but experienced very flat growth right up until the late 1930s. By the end of the period, Nelson was one of the smallest of the ten towns, with only slightly over half the population of the largest town, Hamilton.

Census population data was used to correlate the rate of growth in with Labour's share of the major party vote in each town over the period. The percentage growth since the last census year was used to indicate the rate of growth of a town. This figure was reached by dividing the

difference in population between one census and the previous one by the current population. For example, in 1951, the population of Invercargill was 28074. At the pervious census in 1946, Invercargill's population was 24104. So the figure for the intercensal growth of the town in 1951 is given as 14.1 percent. Table 3.5 gives the figures for rate of population growth for each town across the period.

Table 3.5: Intercensal population growth in ten provincial town electorates 1926-1961<sup>38</sup>

Town	% growth 1921- 1926	% growth 1926- 1936	% growth 1936- 1945	% growth 1945- 1951	% growth 1951- 1956	% growth 1956- 1961	Total growth 1921- 1961
Hamilton	18.4%	13.2%	26.5%	26.3%	17.0%	18.3%	72.9%
Palmerston North	13.7%	18.3%	12.2%	17.2%	14.3%	14.6%	61.8%
Nelson	8.7%	9.3%	13.9%	22.6%	5.0%	27.0%	61.3%
New Plymouth	18.7%	15.8%	10.3%	14.7%	9.7%	19.4%	61.2%
Hastings	10.2%	20.4%	12.8%	15.2%	10.1%	21.3%	61.0%
Invercargill	12.5%	13.5%	6.7%	14.1%	8.0%	15.2%	52.2%
Gisborne	16.7%	3.4%	8.0%	14.7%	12.0%	19.1%	49.8%
Timaru	7.4%	12.8%	5.0%	13.7%	9.0%	6.5%	43.4%
Napier	5.2%	1.1%	11.3%	12.5%	7.3%	15.9%	41.6%
Wanganui	30.7%	-2.7%	2.8%	12.5%	8.1%	14.2%	35.7%

Timaru, Napier and especially Wanganui were the slowest growing towns across the period. Gisborne and Invercargill were also fairly slow growing, whereas Palmerston North, Nelson, New Plymouth and Hastings grew fairly quickly. Hamilton showed by far the strongest growth between 1921 and 1961. As the rank order of the towns in terms of population growth corresponds roughly with their rank order in terms of Labour's share of the major party vote, further investigation was warranted. A Spearman's two-tailed bivariate correlation analysis of the relationship shows that there is indeed a significant negative correlation between support for Labour and the rate of population growth in the towns over the period. The correlation coefficient is -0.514. Correlation tables output from SPSS for all correlations in this chapter are found in appendix three.

There is nothing in the literature about the relationship between Labour vote and rate of population growth in New Zealand towns. While it is outside the scope of this study to investigate this phenomenon further, it is an extremely interesting result which is worthy of further research. Three potential hypotheses may be mentioned at this stage. Firstly, it could be that population growth in the towns was occurring predominantly within a certain social cohort that was inclined

<sup>38</sup> Data taken from *N.Z. Census*.

towards National voting, for example white collar workers. Secondly, it could be that in faster growing towns there was more opportunity for upward social mobility, which helped to create a social-psychological tendency to vote for the political party which espoused the philosophy of the individual. The inverse effect could be that where there was a degree of demographic and economic stagnation, the result of a low birthrate and a high rate of out-migration from an area, there was increased solidarity among those who remained in the town. Such voters may have been more likely to have remained steadfastly loyal to the party which prioritised social security, equality of opportunity and government intervention over individual advancement. Finally, the correlation may be spurious, the result of an invisible third factor influencing the two variables here.

## Unionisation

Trade unions have always provided the foundation of support for the Labour Party. The pivotal importance of union support to the Labour Party both in terms of membership and financial resourcing is well established in the historiography of the party. Throughout the period of Carr's term, the major contributors to the party's finances and campaign funds were unions. In his thesis on trade union financial assistance to the Labour Party, Bentley noted that it was only at the 1938 election, after the introduction of compulsory unionism in 1936, that Labour had the financial resources to stand a candidate in every electorate. Compulsory unionism also allowed Labour to properly fund its head office, and run more effective election campaigns, employing advertising agencies for the first time.<sup>39</sup> Each L.R.C. was funded by the Labour Party head office according to the capitation received from unions and branches within its boundaries. Thus, one might expect that in electorates with high levels of union membership, the local Labour organisations would be better able to capitalise on preexisting support for the party through better operational and campaign funding.

Returns to Labour Party Annual Conference provided data on the membership of unions affiliated to the party for each electorate across the period of Carr's career. A number of aspects of union membership were examined in the analysis. Firstly, the total membership of both affiliated unions and Labour Party branches was correlated with Labour's share of the major party vote. Once the

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<sup>39</sup> Bentley, "Trade Union Financial Assistance", pp. 5, 38.

crucial importance of the level of union membership in affecting the Labour vote had been established, the nature of unionisation in each town was investigated. The key factors with regard to the nature of unionisation were, firstly, the types of unions which predominated during the period and, secondly, levels of union membership in the period before the introduction of compulsory unionism. Unions associated with large workplaces and a tradition of political activity were expected to influence the electorate in a Labour direction, while the level of pre-compulsory unionisation was likely to be an important indicator of the level of organisation of industrial labour in a town. Table 3.6 shows the number of members of unions affiliated to the Labour Party as a percentage of the total vote in the electorate for that year.

Table 3.6: Affiliated union membership as a proportion of the total vote in ten provincial town electorates 1931-1960<sup>40</sup>

Electorate	1931	1935	1938	1943	1949	1951	1954	1957	1960
Gisborne	5.6%	4.3%	18.4%	19.8%	24.0%	24.2%	17.3%	18.9%	14.7%
Hamilton	0.3%	0.8%	15.4%	0.0%	24.9%	19.0%	11.3%	18.7%	8.8%
Hastings	2.4%	1.0%	17.0%	16.2%	0.0%	15.5%	13.4%	14.3%	13.7%
Invercargill	5.0%	3.4%	16.4%	15.2%	20.7%	23.0%	20.4%	14.9%	12.1%
Napier	6.2%	4.5%	18.1%	16.5%	26.7%	19.3%	14.5%	13.0%	12.1%
Nelson	0.9%	2.0%	19.6%	16.1%	11.8%	10.9%	9.7%	13.1%	10.4%
New Plymouth	6.8%	3.6%	13.3%	16.7%	17.7%	15.8%	11.7%	14.0%	10.2%
Palmerston North	3.7%	2.2%	15.4%	15.6%	23.1%	22.8%	19.9%	20.1%	17.3%
Timaru	7.7%	3.1%	14.9%	21.5%	24.1%	23.7%	24.2%	24.0%	21.1%
Wanganui	3.6%	3.6%	19.1%	20.7%	25.2%	25.5%	17.3%	16.8%	14.2%

In the majority of towns there was a decrease in union membership between 1931 and 1935 as a result of the depression. In 1938, there was a leap in membership as a result of the introduction of compulsory unionism in 1936. Membership continued to rise throughout the 1940s to a peak in 1949 as unions strengthened under Labour rule. After that point, membership of affiliated unions went into decline under National, with only a temporary respite at the 1957 election. In this sense, the fortunes of affiliated unions broadly reflected those of the parliamentary party. Union membership across all towns moved in parallel, with the exception of Timaru in the 1950s. The stability of union membership in Timaru in this period differentiated it from other strong Labour-voting towns like Napier and Wanganui, where membership dropped dramatically. Nelson ranks consistently lowly on the table, Timaru and Wanganui consistently highly, otherwise there were few steady patterns in the relative rank order of the towns.

<sup>40</sup> Data taken from *New Zealand Labour Party Annual Conference Reports*.

Membership of Labour Party branches rose in all towns though the 1930s, then dropped after 1940 as a result of both the controversy over the expulsion of Lee and the loss of many members to war duties of one kind or another.<sup>41</sup> Membership recovered through the 1940s and increased beyond its level in the late 1930s. However, under the National government of the 1950s, like union membership, branch membership went into steady decline, interrupted only by a brief recovery in 1957. The movement of individual towns across the period was much less regular with regard to branch membership than union membership. Hamilton ranks consistently lowly across the period, but other than that there are few or no other discernable patterns in the rankings of the towns.

Correlations between Labour's share of the major party vote and rates of union membership, branch membership and combined union and branch membership in the ten towns show that it is the level of affiliated union membership which had the strongest relationship to Labour vote. The correlation is positive but fairly weak, with a coefficient of just 0.216. There was no correlation between level of party membership and Labour vote.

It is possible that the qualitative nature of union membership in each town was more significant than the overall level of union membership in terms of its influence on the Labour vote. In particular, the types of unions which predominated in each town may be significant, as they reflect the industrial profile of the electorate. In his discussion on factors determining the different levels of support for Labour between the ten towns, Chapman claimed that the crucial difference between National- and Labour-voting provincial towns was the nature of industrial development in each town. The National-voting provincial towns were service towns to their rural hinterland, Chapman claimed, whereas Labour-voting towns were the home of "independent industrial development." As examples of such independent industrial development, Chapman cited a "long established and busy port, railway workshops, freezing works, light industrial factories...."<sup>42</sup>

The levels of union membership each town in the era before the introduction of compulsory unionism was also significant, as it demonstrated both the length of establishment of unions during Carr's term and the will and ability of workers to organise in the absence of government compulsion. As there are no Labour Party records of union membership before 1929, figures from

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<sup>41</sup> Data on Labour party branch membership in the ten towns is given in appendix three.

the *A.J.H.R.* were used instead. Because of the complexities of the three party system and the fragmentary data, it was impossible to perform an quantitative comparative analysis of the relationship between union membership and the Labour vote in the period between 1911 and 1935. Nevertheless, a qualitative examination of patterns of union membership in the pre-compulsory era revealed some interesting patterns.

Most union members across all ten towns in the pre-compulsory era were involved in agricultural processing, construction and transport. The most widely established of these were the freezing workers' unions in Gisborne, Hastings, and New Plymouth. Other unions of significant size in agricultural processing industries were the Shearers' Union in Gisborne; the Slaughtermens' and Milk and Cheese Factory Workers' Unions in Invercargill; the Wool Workers' Union in Napier; the Flax Workers' Union in Palmerston North; and the Bakers', Millers' and Biscuit Factory Employees' Unions in Timaru. The most important transport-related unions in the period were the watersiders' unions, which were some of the largest unions in the port towns: Gisborne, Napier, Nelson, New Plymouth, Timaru and Wanganui. The other significant transport-related union across all the towns was the Drivers' Union, although the Coach and Motor Union, Tramways Union and Taxi Drivers' Union also emerged in this period. The third category of industry which was highly unionised was construction. In every town the Carpenters' Union was strong and long-established, and the Painters' and Builders' Union was also relatively strong in this period. Finally, the General Labourers' and Engineers' Unions were established in many of the towns in this period. In terms of absolute numbers of workers belonging to unions, Invercargill and Gisborne ranked far more highly than the other towns, and Timaru, Hastings and Hamilton ranked very lowly.

Patterns of union membership in the pre-compulsory era directly reflected the kinds of industry in each electorate, rather than any inherent social characteristic of the towns themselves. The same key unions tended to establish themselves in each town, and none of the towns showed a particularly strong tendency towards high levels of unionisation.

Many of the unions established in the pre-compulsory period continued to be dominant during the following decades. The largest and most widespread unions in the compulsory period were the waterside workers' unions, the A.S.R.S., the freezing workers' unions, the Hotel and Restaurant

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<sup>42</sup> Chapman, Jackson, and Mitchell, *Politics in Action*, p. 241.

Employees' Union, the New Zealand Workers' Union and the Engineers' Union. Of the six port towns, Napier, New Plymouth and Timaru had the most consistently strong watersiders' unions. The Nelson union never had more than one hundred members, whereas the Gisborne and Wanganui unions were relatively strong in the 1930s with a membership of around 160, but had dwindled away to nothing by the mid 1950s. While the Timaru Watersiders' Union was not particularly large, its membership grew steadily across the period from 120 members in 1928 to 169 in 1960. The Napier and New Plymouth Watersiders' Unions were much larger, growing from two to three hundred across the period.<sup>43</sup>

Freezing works were some of the largest employers of labour in the country at this time, and Timaru and Hastings had by far the largest freezing workers' unions of the ten towns. Both towns had two works within their borough boundaries. The combined membership at the Tomoana and Whakatu Works in Hastings was 727 when the union first appeared in Labour Party records in 1938, and had grown to 882 by 1960. Together, the Pareora and Smithfield Works in Timaru had a membership of 367 in 1928 which had grown to 650 by 1960. Gisborne, Invercargill, Palmerston North, and Wanganui all had unions of at least 400 by 1951. Napier and New Plymouth had comparatively small unions with only 150 and 250 members. Hamilton was the only town with no freezing workers' union for the whole period, and the union in Nelson was relatively small with less than a hundred members. In all towns except Hamilton and Nelson, the freezing workers' union was one of the dominant unions, and certainly represented the largest unionised workplace in the town. The freezing workers' unions in five of the towns (Invercargill, Napier, Nelson, New Plymouth, and Wanganui) appear to have disaffiliated from the Labour Party in the wake of the waterfront dispute. The Timaru freezing workers, however, remained affiliated to the party throughout the 1950s.

The A.S.R.S. was present in all the towns except Nelson, which had no railway. It was strongest in Hamilton, Invercargill, Palmerston North and Wanganui, all of which had membership of between two and five hundred across the period. The Napier and Timaru unions had a membership of around 250, while Hastings, New Plymouth and Gisborne had small unions of no more 150. The other widespread and large unions in the period were the Hotel and Restaurant Employees', Workers', Engineers, Carpenters' and Drivers' Unions. However, these unions tended to play a

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<sup>43</sup> *N.Z.L.P. Annual Conference Reports.*



less significant role in the rise of the political labour movement. This was because their members tended to work in small groups or by themselves. Unions whose members worked together in larger workplaces (for example freezing workers' and watersiders' unions) often had more defined sense of identity, greater solidarity and an increased likelihood of political and industrial militancy.<sup>44</sup>

It is informative to reexamine patterns of union membership in light of Chapman's criteria for "independent industrial development". Chapman argued that the presence of such industries made an electorate more likely to vote Labour. Labour Party records of affiliated union membership across the ten towns reinforce Chapman's argument to a large extent. Chapman's criteria, as stated above, are for the most part compatible with the kinds of unions which have been discussed thus far: ports, railways, freezing works, and also woollen mills, processing plants, fertilizer works, and light industry. Strongly Labour-voting towns Timaru, Napier and Wanganui all had moderately or very strong waterside workers', freezing workers' and railway workers' unions. They also had other mill, processing plant and light industrial unions with a membership of over fifty, such as the Tobacco Workers' Union in Napier, the Woollen and Flour Mills Workers' Unions in Timaru and the Timberworkers' and Chemical Workers' Unions in Wanganui. On the other hand, Hamilton, a strongly National-voting town, has neither a port nor freezing works. In fact, with the exception of the railway workers, no unions of significant size in Hamilton were associated with large workplaces. The match between the nature of union membership in the ten towns and Chapman's criteria for the kind of industrial development which characterised Labour-voting towns is not perfect, however. With its large Watersiders', Freezing Workers' and General Labourers' Unions, New Plymouth gave the impression of being strongly Labour-voting, but was in fact one of the strongest National-voting towns.

The analysis shows that Timaru was characterised by high levels of unionisation during the period of Carr's career. This was undoubtedly an important factor in the electoral strength of Labour in the period. Furthermore, the presence of key unions such as the A.S.R.S., Watersiders', Freezing Workers', and (to a lesser extent) Flour Mills Workers' Unions would have greatly increased the political influence of organised labour in the electorate. Members of these unions worked together in large workplaces and were known for their political activity.

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<sup>44</sup> Bert Roth, *Trade Unions in New Zealand : Past and Present* (Wellington: Reed Education, 1973), p. 41.

## Religion

The relationship between sectarianism and voting in New Zealand has not attracted the attention of many historians. The scarcity of secondary material on the subject can perhaps be interpreted as a kind of *de facto* historiographic consensus that sectarianism did not play an important role in twentieth century voting patterns. Catholics accounted for about fourteen percent of the overall New Zealand population in the period, but there was wide variation in the proportion of Catholics in any given locality. The proportion of Catholics was higher in small towns and poorer suburbs, and the West Coast, where 30 percent of the population were Catholic. Most Catholics in New Zealand were Irish, and many were unskilled, and this, combined with a degree of opposition from Protestants, helped to create solidarity among the Catholic population. Institutions such as the Catholic school system and the Catholic Federation (formed in 1913) were the product and expression of that cohesion.<sup>45</sup>

Sectarianism and voting do arise in the New Zealand historiography in the period before Carr came to power in Timaru. The Protestant Political Association emerged in the post World War One era under the charismatic and bigoted leadership of Howard Elliott. In its attacks, the P.P.A. would associate Catholics with the radical left. Elliott aligned himself with the Reform Party and was instrumental in the decline of the Liberals through his persistent criticisms of Liberal leader, Catholic Joseph Ward. The P.P.A. stirred up anti-Catholic sentiment amongst Protestants, but its activities were largely confined to the cities, and it went into decline in the 1920s, disappearing by 1934.<sup>46</sup> So, while there was a political alliance of sorts between certain radical Protestants and conservative politicians, evidence of strong Labour voting among Catholics during Carr's period is circumstantial at best. Nevertheless many (conservative, Protestant) contemporaries claimed that bloc voting by Roman Catholics was a factor in Carr's success in 1928. The impressive Catholic Basilica overlooking central Timaru lent rhetorical weight to this argument. Table 3.7 shows Catholics as a percentage of the total population of each town.

<sup>45</sup> Olssen, "Towards a New Society," p. 270.

<sup>46</sup> Miles Fairburn, "The Farmers Take Over (1912-30)," in *The Oxford Illustrated History of New Zealand*, ed. Keith Sinclair (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 192-195.

**Table 3.7: Proportion of total population Catholic in ten provincial town electorates 1926-1961<sup>47</sup>**

Town	1926	1936	1945	1951	1956	1961
Gisborne	14.2%	14.7%	14.1%	13.4%	13.9%	14.0%
Hamilton	13.3%	13.5%	13.5%	13.8%	14.3%	14.5%
Hastings	14.8%	15.0%	15.2%	14.8%	13.7%	14.2%
Invercargill	13.1%	13.5%	14.9%	14.9%	15.5%	15.9%
Napier	14.6%	14.2%	14.5%	14.8%	15.7%	16.3%
Nelson	10.1%	10.0%	10.2%	10.8%	10.8%	11.3%
New Plymouth	10.5%	10.7%	12.5%	12.9%	12.8%	14.2%
Palmerston North	12.5%	12.7%	12.6%	12.0%	12.9%	13.5%
Timaru	14.0%	14.9%	15.4%	15.3%	15.7%	16.8%
Wanganui	13.2%	14.7%	14.7%	15.3%	15.8%	16.7%

There was comparatively little variation among the towns in terms of the proportion of Catholics across the period. The lowest proportion of Catholics in a town was ten percent (in Nelson in 1936), the highest 16.8 percent (in Timaru in 1961). In most towns most of the time, about fourteen percent of the population were Catholic, which corresponded to the national average. Nevertheless, there appears to be a rough rank-order correlation between the proportion of Catholics and the Labour vote in these towns: National-voting Nelson and New Plymouth were lowest in terms of their proportion of Catholics, whereas Labour-voting Timaru, Napier and Wanganui all ranked highly. The other notable feature of the table is that every town except Gisborne and Hastings showed a marked growth in the proportion of Catholics across the period.

There was a marked decline, on the other hand, in the proportion of Anglicans in all towns across the period.<sup>48</sup> All the towns except Invercargill and Timaru had very similar proportions of Anglicans. Invercargill and, to a lesser extent, Timaru had much lower proportions of Anglicans than the other towns, and correspondingly high proportions of Presbyterians. There was a very wide variation in the proportions of Anglicans in the period, from 49.9 percent in New Plymouth in 1926 to just 16.4 percent in Invercargill in 1961. There was also wide variation in the proportions of Presbyterians: from 13.6 percent in Nelson in 1936 to 45.3 percent in Invercargill in 1951. The Methodists constituted a much smaller proportion of the population than the other major denominations, ranging between 4.4 percent in Gisborne in 1926 to 14.9 percent in New Plymouth in 1961. In general, the proportion of Methodists was declining gradually across the period.

<sup>47</sup> Data taken from *N.Z. Census*.

<sup>48</sup> Data on the proportions of Anglicans, Presbyterians and Methodists in the ten towns is included in appendix three.

Correlation analyses between the proportions of each of the four major Christian denominations and Labour's share of the major party vote produced no statistically significant relationships. There is a weak positive correlation (correlation coefficient of 0.234) between the proportion of Catholics and the strength of the Labour vote in the towns. However, there is also a weak positive correlation between the proportion of Anglicans and the Labour vote. The only statistically significant correlation was between the proportion of Methodists and the National vote. But Methodists account for very small number of voters (10 percent of the population even in strongly National-voting towns) so their voting preferences cannot have affected election results in the towns to any significant degree. It appears that religion did not play a decisive role in influencing the Labour vote in these towns in this period.

### Home Ownership

While both major parties aimed their policies and campaigning at making home ownership an accessible goal for as much of the population as possible, it may be expected that a higher level of home ownership in a town would correlate with a higher National vote, and vice versa. Chapman found that voters who were boarding or flatting were less likely to swing away from Labour in 1957.<sup>49</sup> Where levels of home ownership were low, and there were greater proportions of voters in rental accommodation, the appeal of Labour's state housing and interventionist welfare policies would have been more popular. Table 3.8 shows the proportion of all dwellings in each town which were rented.

Table 3.8: Proportion of all dwellings rented in ten provincial town electorates 1926-1961<sup>50</sup>

Electorate	1926	1936	1945	1951	1956	1961
Gisborne	43.6%	52.1%	44.1%	33.7%	27.1%	25.8%
Hamilton	41.4%	57.4%	48.9%	39.9%	29.1%	27.5%
Hastings	35.2%	48.5%	43.1%	33.7%	23.2%	22.9%
Invercargill	23.5%	33.0%	22.9%	18.1%	14.8%	16.1%
Napier	42.9%	52.6%	47.6%	40.6%	29.5%	26.5%
Nelson	25.9%	33.7%	32.8%	27.5%	21.9%	19.4%
New Plymouth	31.2%	45.3%	39.8%	32.8%	24.9%	23.4%
Palmerston North	36.7%	48.7%	44.6%	39.8%	32.6%	31.5%
Timaru	30.8%	41.3%	34.5%	30.8%	25.0%	22.6%
Wanganui	36.7%	52.5%	42.8%	33.2%	24.7%	23.7%

<sup>49</sup> Chapman, Jackson, and Mitchell, *Politics in Action*, p. 248.

<sup>50</sup> Data taken from *N.Z. Census*.

There was a fairly wide variation in levels of renting in the towns, from Invercargill at the end of the period where less than fifteen percent of inhabited dwellings were rented, to Hamilton in 1936 where almost sixty percent were rented. Invercargill and Nelson had the lowest levels of renting, Hamilton, Napier and Palmerston North the highest. There was a general decline in renting in all towns over the period. Invercargill and Nelson also had the highest levels of mortgage holders, New Plymouth, Napier and Wanganui the lowest.<sup>51</sup> There was a gentle increase across all towns over the period in the number of households paying off their properties with a mortgage or time payment. There was a steeper increase across the period in the number of freehold properties, although the very highest level of home ownership, in New Plymouth in 1956, was still only slightly over a third of all households. Hamilton, Palmerston North and Napier showed the lowest rates of freehold ownership, New Plymouth, Nelson and Timaru the highest.

Correlation analyses of the relationship between dwelling tenure and strength of Labour vote reveal fairly consistent patterns. Levels of renting, and the combined number of freehold and mortgaged properties, correlate strongly with the Labour vote. The positive correlation between the proportion of rented properties and the Labour vote in the towns is statistically significant, with a correlation coefficient of 0.325. When the proportions of mortgaged and freehold properties are combined into a single "home owner" category, and this figure correlated with the Labour vote, the result is also statistically significant, with a coefficient of -0.336. Overall, there was a reasonably strong relationship between dwelling tenure and Labour vote in the ten towns in this period. Towns with a higher proportion of their citizens in rented accommodation were more likely to return a Labour member.

Strangely, Timaru appears to run against these broader trends. For most of the period, there was a fairly low level of renting in Timaru, much less than the other strongly Labour-voting towns Napier and Wanganui, and in fact considerably less than Hamilton, a strongly National-voting town. Furthermore, Timaru had one of the highest rates of home ownership across the period, considerably higher than Hamilton. Levels of home ownership and renting were the product not only of income levels and occupational status (social factors which also influenced the Labour vote) but also of purely regional variation. While cheaper housing in the South Island may have

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<sup>51</sup> Data on dwelling tenure in the ten towns is given in appendix three.

meant that home ownership was more accessible in South Island towns, this did not directly affect voter behaviour there.

The Timaru electorate won by Carr in 1928 was one which was socially and historically predisposed towards Labour voting. Timaru's economy had been based on the processing of agricultural products since the end of the nineteenth century. In a town where light industrial and transport-related workplaces were prevalent, it was no surprise that there was a high level of unionisation. The strength of the unions in Timaru created an environment in which there was widespread support for the ideals of the Labour Party, and assured a high level of funding for the local party organisation. Additionally, agricultural land ownership patterns dating back to the nineteenth century produced an oppositional sense of class consciousness, and it is possible that this acted to increase solidarity amongst Labour voters. A pattern of anti-conservative voting had been established in the electorate during the Liberal era in New Zealand politics, and 1925 was the only election at which Timaru voted emphatically against Labour.

Residential stability and slow population growth meant that the electoral geography of the electorate remained very stable, with the majority of polling booths dominated by Labour. The fact that most votes for the National Party were cast in predominantly Labour areas may have made the development of an effective National Party organisation more difficult. Timaru's slow rate of population growth was a factor common to all the Labour-voting provincial town electorates. Timaru also showed other social characteristics which were statistically associated with a high Labour vote, including high levels of unionisation and a high Catholic population.

#### 4. "A man like Carr": Clyde Carr establishes himself in Timaru, 1928 to 1938

"If it had been anyone but Clyde Carr, we could have understood, but this is past comprehension."

"Deeply regret the stupidity of electors of Timaru."

- Notes of consolation to Francis Rolleston after his defeat by Carr at the 1928 election<sup>1</sup>

Chapters four and five give a detailed description of Carr's career as MP for Timaru between 1928 and 1962. Carr's political career is divided up into two periods: 1928 to 1938, and 1939 to 1962. Chapter four is concerned with Carr's initial win and work to establish himself in the electorate between 1928 and 1938. In the first decade of his career, Carr cut his political teeth with a series of well executed campaigns in Timaru. He proved himself to be a forceful speaker and a capable parliamentarian, although he was not selected for cabinet by Savage in 1935. The mid and late 1930s saw the high point of Carr's political career with his term as president of the Labour Party and the largest majorities of his career in 1935 and 1938. This was a period of ascendancy, popularity and success for Carr.

After 1938, however, Carr's majorities began to slip as the Labour Party entered a gradual electoral decline which was only temporarily reversed in the mid and late 1950s. Nevertheless, Carr held his seat throughout the period. He continued to expound radical and progressive politics in his parliamentary speechmaking and earned the ire of both the Labour Party hierarchy and many voters in Timaru through his association with dissident Labour MP John A. Lee. At the 1943 and 1954 elections, Carr had to defend himself against strong third party candidates representing political positions he himself had once held. By the 1960 election, Carr was seventy-four, and only managed to hold the seat by a tiny margin. While the latter period of Carr's career was a challenging one, in many ways it defined Carr's political achievement. Despite his party's defeat at the polls and his frequently controversial politics, Carr held Timaru at election after election to become one of the longest-serving MPs in New Zealand history. Appendix four shows the level of support for Carr and his opponents across the eleven elections that he won.

The bulk of chapters four and five is devoted to description and analysis of Carr's eleven election campaigns. The primary purpose of the election analyses is to identify those aspects of Carr's campaign technique and policy advocacy that ensured his continued success. A second theme in these sections is the identification of shifts in the nature of campaigning which occurred across the three decades of Carr's term. Other sections within the chapters discuss aspects of Carr's life other than his election campaigns, specifically his policy interests, his family life and his involvement with Lee.

## 1928 Election

In many ways, the most remarkable achievement of Carr's parliamentary career was also his first: to win the Timaru seat in 1928. It was at this election that Carr faced his most formidable opponent, and set the political style that he would maintain for the rest of his career. Carr was irreverent, fiercely egalitarian, witty, non-moralistic, sometimes eccentric and never afraid to provoke controversy when he felt it was warranted. These personality traits - and his main political concerns of social security and industrial development - would characterise all his later campaigns.

Most contemporaries expected the incumbent, the Francis Rolleston, to comfortably hold Timaru in 1928. Not only was it Carr's first election, but he was standing in a completely unfamiliar electorate. Carr had moved down to Timaru just a month before the 1928 election, and was still a member of the Christchurch City Council when he won the seat.<sup>2</sup> Carr's profile in Timaru was negligible. Some Timaruvians were familiar with him as an announcer on 3YA, but he was otherwise unknown in the town. Carr's experience of political campaigning was modest at best, limited to local body campaigns and his work for Daniel Sullivan in 1922.

But it was Rolleston's high status, as much as Carr's inexperience, which made the 1928 result so surprising. At the time of the election, Rolleston was Minister of Defence and Justice, and Attorney General. He had been educated at Christ's College, then studied law at the University of New Zealand at Christchurch, establishing a law practice in Timaru. Rolleston's record of involvement in local politics was extensive. At the 1905 general election he stood unsuccessfully against William Hall-Jones. He became mayor of Timaru in 1921, standing down the next year

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<sup>1</sup> From F.J. Rolleston Papers, Canterbury Museum, Christchurch.

<sup>2</sup> *N.Z. Worker*, 24 October 1928.



when he won the Timaru seat against Labour candidate Percy Vinnell. Rolleston retained the seat in 1925 and became a senior member of Coates' cabinet in January 1926. Rolleston derived further status as a member of a renowned Canterbury family. Francis' father, William, was premier of the Canterbury province and a cabinet minister between 1879 and 1884 and his brother John was MP for Waitomo from 1922 to 1928. The Rolleston name was known in Timaru and across New Zealand and was strongly associated with politics. Rolleston entered the 1928 election campaign as a two term incumbent with a majority of almost 2500.

There were two factors working in Carr's favour at the election, however. Firstly, there was no United Party candidate standing in Timaru. In many electorates at the 1928 election, United candidates took precious votes from Labour. Bruce Brown argued that many town workers and unionists at the 1928 election heard the "musical chink of the seventy million" (a reference to Joseph Ward's election promise raising seventy million pound loan for development) and voted for United. Brown noted that Labour lost two urban seats, Auckland East and Grey Lynn, to United candidates.<sup>3</sup> The second factor working in Carr's favour was that the 1928 election saw a massive nationwide swing away from Reform. In 1925, Reform had won fifty-five seats and 46.5 percent of the national vote, easily forming the government as the Liberal Party's share of the vote slipped to just 20.4 percent and eleven seats. At the 1928 election, however, the rejuvenated Liberals (now named the United Party) increased their vote by almost ten percentage points. Labour's vote dropped slightly and Reform's fell by almost twelve percentage points (largely a result of their poor performance in office and the recession of 1926 and 1927), allowing United to form the government. It was a massive rejection of Reform, and Carr's success in Timaru in 1928 must be seen in this national context.

As he entered the 1928 campaign, Rolleston must have been confident of victory, and perhaps a little complacent. At most of his campaign meetings, he received accolades from the local chair, usually with reference to his efforts as a local MP, his status as a senior cabinet minister, and his family's political heritage. The introduction by the chair of the Waimataitai School Committee was typical, discussing the importance of Rolleston's family to the development of the Canterbury region, then thanking Rolleston for being "courteous and obliging to all sections of the community

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<sup>3</sup> Brown, *Rise of New Zealand Labour*, p. 103.

irrespective of their views.”<sup>4</sup> Rolleston had the respect of all sections of the community, not only because of his cabinet status and work as a local representative, but also his high degree of personal integrity. Newspaper reporters, editors and meeting chairpersons alike were glowing in their praise of Rolleston, showing him genuine respect. Perhaps more surprisingly, Rolleston’s political opponents were quite prepared to acknowledge his ability. Speaking at the Unitarian Hall in support of Carr’s campaign, Daniel Sullivan opened his speech by describing his fellow parliamentarian Rolleston’s reputation as a courteous and able gentleman.<sup>5</sup> Carr himself, on the victory dais on election night, claimed that he regretted the defeat of a gentlemen such as Rolleston, and repeated a comment that he had made earlier in the campaign, that “if Mr Rolleston would have stood as a Labour candidate, he would have preferred to see [Rolleston] in the seat.”<sup>6</sup>

While Rolleston’s position in cabinet increased his personal prestige, it also placed demands on him which restricted the amount of campaigning he was able to do in his own electorate. As a senior minister in an apparently safe seat, Rolleston was frequently called upon to assist Reform candidates in other electorates. A telegram from Coates to Rolleston from October 1928 demonstrated the pressure that Rolleston was under as his party struggled to stem the tide of voters swinging to United:

In addition to Sumner I trust you will be able to take a meeting at Rangiora STOP My hands are more than full and I am unable to meet half the demands which are being made of me STOP I do hope ministers will hold themselves in readiness to render some outside assistance where desired...<sup>7</sup>

The other factor which mitigated the effectiveness of Rolleston’s campaigning was his own style. Rolleston’s speeches were often defensive, delivered in response to Labour’s criticisms of Reform policy. For example, at Rosewill and Waimataitai he began his addresses by dealing at some length with Carr’s accusations that Reform’s legislative support for farmers was reactionary.<sup>8</sup> At Kensington, Rolleston began his speech by addressing Labour’s criticisms of Reform’s changes to

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<sup>4</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 7 November 1928.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, 8 November 1928.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, 15 November 1928.

Industrial Arbitration and Conciliation Act.<sup>9</sup> The defensiveness in Rolleston's rhetoric even extended to his discussion of his own constituency work. Rolleston opened the first meeting of his campaign with an apology for not spending as much time in Timaru as he would have liked, as his ministerial duties required him to spend a great deal of time in Wellington.<sup>10</sup> Whether Rolleston was conscious of it or not, his defensiveness was a poor campaign strategy, as it served to repeat Carr's criticisms of his own party, allowing Carr to set the agenda, and placing himself on the back foot. By contrast, Carr would usually open his speeches with either a criticism of the status quo under Reform or a positive expression of what Labour would do when elected to government.

The most powerful aspect of Rolleston's speechmaking was his criticism of Labour. He accused the Labour Party of concealing its true objectives of the socialisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange in its election policy statements. Therefore, Rolleston argued, Labour could not be trusted. In any case, Labour's policy proposals were unrealistic and too expensive to be implemented.<sup>11</sup> By contrast, Reform were prudent, and their administration of government during the recent economic difficulties had been sound. Rolleston defended the government's record on unemployment, claiming that the New Zealand situation still compared favourably with conditions in the rest of the world, and defended the limited progress made in closer land settlement by pointing out that much the land area of the large estates was made up of unimproved tussock land that was inappropriate for settlement by smaller land holders.<sup>12</sup>

Rolleston was most comfortable speaking on rural issues, and tended to focus on these during the campaign. He frequently referred to the importance of Reform's protection of the wheat and flour industry, taking credit for a policy with strong local appeal.<sup>13</sup> At Otupua and Seadown, for example, the meeting reports simply state that Rolleston spoke on matters of interest to farmers.<sup>14</sup> Elsewhere, Rolleston focused his speechmaking on Reform's land settlement and primary industry protection policies. By aligning himself with farmers and their interests, Rolleston risked alienating the large urban section of his electorate whose political interests lay elsewhere. Despite

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<sup>7</sup> Coates to Rolleston, 31 October 1928. Item 66, Folder 10, F.J. Rolleston Papers, Canterbury Museum, Christchurch. Rangiora was in the Hurunui electorate, which had been held by United leader Forbes since 1908, while Sumner was in Lyttelton, a very safe Labour seat.

<sup>8</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 1 and 7 November 1928.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, 13 November 1928.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, 21 October 1928.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, 14 November 1928.

<sup>12</sup> For example *ibid.*, 24 October 1928.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, 1 November 1928.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, 29 October and 3 November 1928.

his defensiveness and rural focus, there is no doubt that Rolleston was an effective and accomplished public speaker. Rolleston's speechwriting and presentation skills had been honed through extensive political experience. His speeches were well organised, easily comprehensible and persuasive. Rolleston also received strong support from the local press, in particular the *Timaru Herald*. In its editorials, the *Timaru Herald* explicitly endorsed Rolleston's candidature and the Reform administration, as well as echoing Rolleston's criticisms of the "socialistic" Labour Party.<sup>15</sup> The *Herald* also cast aspersions on Carr's abilities as a politician and complemented Rolleston on his reserved, proper behaviour, lack of ostentation and a refusal to make promises he could not carry out.<sup>16</sup> To all intents and purposes, the political voice of the *Timaru Herald* was that of the Reform Party, and it continued to actively support conservative political interests for the duration of Carr's term in Timaru.

Carr's campaign contrasted with Rolleston's in its fundamental approach, both in terms of his policy advocacy and his campaign style. Carr's main policy concerns were threefold. Firstly, at almost every meeting, he advocated the breaking up and closer settlement of large estates.<sup>17</sup> This was Labour Party policy, and an issue of particular relevance to South Canterbury with its long-established sheep-runs and their historical and symbolic association with the privileged land-holding class. Secondly, Carr went to great lengths to emphasise Labour's plans for the protection and development of secondary industry, which contrasted with Reform's focus on issues concerning farmers and primary industry.<sup>18</sup> Carr argued that industrial development was needed to reduce the country's reliance on imported goods and create employment opportunities. He advocated the decentralisation of industry (and shipping) away from the four main centres to secondary centres like Timaru. Thirdly, Carr focused on the expansion and improvement of the social security system. He promised relief to the increasing number of people who were finding themselves out of work as export prices for New Zealand's agricultural goods fell, and the country entered into a serious depression. Labour's welfare plans provided a strong point of contrast with the United and Reform parties, which were portrayed by Carr as being completely insensitive to the needs of the unemployed.

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<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, 5 November 1928.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, 24 October 1928.

<sup>17</sup> For example *ibid.*, 12 November 1928.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, 31 October 1928.

Importantly, Labour's innovative welfare proposals also helped to forge its image as the progressive party of new ideas. Carr's campaign was generally positive, as he was able to suggest new policies and novel solutions to the problems faced by the country that the Reform government had not been able to address successfully. Carr would later describe the 1928 election as not so much a party political battle as "a clash of two worlds, one the world of the past and the other the world of the future.... I was facing the future, thinking of the development of industry and commerce in this comparatively small town of Timaru and Mr Rolleston was thinking of it as had always been... as a secluded select community."<sup>19</sup>

Other themes in Carr's speeches were targeted more deliberately at the Timaru electorate. For example, he championed the need for improvements to Timaru Harbour. The "sound administrator" Rolleston, on the other hand, defended the decision of the parliamentary committee which had ruled against further funding for harbour development.<sup>20</sup> In the final speech of his campaign, Carr listed of a whole raft of improvements and general amenities that he would push for if elected: harbour facilities, a new railway station, and three new post offices.<sup>21</sup>

The defining aspect of Carr's campaigning, however, was not his policy advocacy, but his campaign style, which was distinguishable from Rolleston's on two counts. Firstly, Carr was a far more active campaigner, and secondly, his personality came across as a far more humane and sympathetic than Rolleston's. A count of meeting notices from the *Timaru Herald* during the campaign shows that Carr held approximately thirty meetings over twenty-one days of campaigning, and that Rolleston held twenty-one meetings over sixteen days of campaigning. However, it was the nature of his campaign meetings, rather than their number, which truly differentiated Carr's campaign from Rolleston's.

Carr went to extraordinary efforts to reach the people whose votes he hoped to win, and to address them on their own terms. He held a number of large evening meetings outside the Crown Hotel in the central city, which were attended by up to five hundred people.<sup>22</sup> Outdoor meetings were considered rather unusual, and attracted condescending comment from the *Timaru Herald*. Carr's meetings ran late into the night, and, while they often commenced an hour or two after closing time, the strongly social character and high attendance at the meetings suggest that many

<sup>19</sup> *N.Z.P.D.*, Vol. 274, 10 September 1946.

<sup>20</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 8 November 1928.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, 13 November 1928.

of those present had begun their evening at the Crown Hotel. The pub was not the only unorthodox place used by Carr for campaign meetings. Carr visited the Timaru Old Men's Home, where he spoke on old age pensions, then entertained the men with songs and recitations.<sup>23</sup> The next afternoon, in teeming rain, Carr held a meeting for relief workers at Cave. The meeting had to be held under the shelter of the bush due to the rain, and on the way to the site, Carr had to "walk the plank" as the Pareora River was flooded. At the meeting, Carr related his experience on the Labour-led Christchurch City Council where trade union wages had been paid to unemployed working on borough works, and explained Labour's proposals to introduce unemployment insurance.<sup>24</sup> Carr also attended a social held by the Young Peoples' Social Club, where, after his address, he sang songs to the seventy young people gathered there. At this meeting, Carr claimed that the labour movement was a youth movement in its vigour, hopes and ideals.<sup>25</sup>

Carr also held a number of meetings at remote stores in settlements outside of Timaru town. His meeting at Rosewill was attended by an audience of only twenty, but according to the report, they had travelled, despite the poor weather, from as far as eight miles away. Despite the difficulties of travelling in rural areas in such conditions (Carr's driver took a wrong turn in the darkness, delaying the start of the meeting<sup>26</sup>), there were many willing volunteers prepared to drive Carr out to these settlements at little or no cost to the party.<sup>27</sup> Further demonstrating his versatility, Carr lead a couple of services at the North Street Congregationalist Church at the end of his campaign, which would surely have provided an opportunity for him promote his political views from the pulpit.<sup>28</sup>

Carr tailored his campaign speeches to specific audiences. At the freezing workers' community of Pareora, he dealt with over-capitalisation in the freezing industry and its negative effect on workers' wage rates, and on the general downturn in rural work.<sup>29</sup> At a meeting for women at Caroline Bay Hall, Carr spoke of how "the future welfare of the world lies in its womanhood",

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<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, 10 November 1928.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, 27 October 1928.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, 29 October 1928.

<sup>25</sup> *N.Z. Worker*, 24 October 1928.

<sup>26</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 31 October 1928.

<sup>27</sup> *N.Z. Worker*, 7 November 1928.

<sup>28</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 10 November 1928.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, 2 November 1928.

quoting feminist philosopher Benjamin Kidd and urging women to take full advantage of opportunities to participate in local and central government.<sup>30</sup>

Carr's experience both as a minister of religion and a broadcaster proved very valuable during the campaign. In contrast to the austere Rolleston, Carr's warmth and humanity was demonstrated in both his personality and policy advocacy. His meetings generally were not only well attended, but comparatively informal, relaxed and warm affairs. Meetings often ran past their allotted times, and occasionally musical performances or dances followed the official proceedings.<sup>31</sup> Aside from the friendly banter, Carr displayed a quick wit and natural sense of humour at his meetings. When the *Timaru Herald* failed to publish his full biographical statement in their candidate profiles, Carr quipped sarcastically that they had done so deliberately, as "it would not do to unduly popularise a Labour candidate at election time." Later in the same speech Carr bemoaned the fact that under Reform, the number of horses on the land had decreased, but "the number of asses, goats and mules had greatly increased."<sup>32</sup> The atmosphere of Carr's meetings could not have contrasted more strongly with Rolleston's.

Interestingly, there is some evidence that Carr had some profile in Timaru as a radio announcer. Radio audiences in Timaru would have heard Carr's 3YA broadcasts from Christchurch.<sup>33</sup> At Fairview, the chairman of the meeting introduced Carr, mentioning that "his voice was familiar to wireless listeners."<sup>34</sup> In *The Radio Years*, Patrick Day stated that radio announcers at the time were very well known, being among "the first to experience the mass recognition that broadcasting conferred. ...it was evident that Clyde Carr's announcing position at 3YA helped him win the Timaru seat in 1928."<sup>35</sup>

Also crucial to Carr's first campaign was the support of three guest speakers who held meetings on his behalf in Timaru: party leader Henry Holland, MP for Avon Daniel Sullivan, and party president and mayor of Christchurch, Rev J.K. Archer. Archer was an important figure for Carr, both as a fellow Labour member on the Christchurch City Council and as a minister of religion whose religious beliefs and went hand in hand with his passionate involvement in labour politics.

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<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, 5 November 1928.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*, 22 October 1928.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*, 13 November 1928.

<sup>33</sup> Jim Sullivan, *Tuning in to Timaru : Fifty Years of Radio in South Canterbury, 1949-1999* (Timaru: Radio Reunion, 1999), p. 3.

<sup>34</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 25 October 1928.

<sup>35</sup> Patrick Day, *The Radio Years : A History of Broadcasting in New Zealand : Volume One* (Auckland: Auckland University Press in association with the Broadcasting History Trust, 1994), p. 165.

Accordingly, when Archer attended the opening meeting of his campaign, Carr described Labour as a movement for Christian values, trying to achieve justice, freedom and equality for all people.<sup>36</sup> Carr also alluded to the fact that Archer was described by the Christchurch newspapers as “Mr” Archer, because they refused to believe the Labour Party could have “respectable men” in it. This helps explain Carr’s insistence on holding on to the honorific Reverend years after having left the Church. Carr took care to describe himself as “minister of the Gospel” whenever possible during the 1928 campaign, and to associate Labour with Christian principles.<sup>37</sup> Perhaps the most explicit statement of this nature came in his address at the Theatre Royal when he quoted Archer, saying that “the only chance [the Church] had to save itself was to recognise that the Gospel needed to be an economic one, and must apply itself to the needs of the Church. Labour needed the Church, and the Church needed Labour.”<sup>38</sup> In the campaign advertising he placed in the *Timaru Herald*, Carr further elucidated his political philosophy, accusing Reform of being the

willing tool... of the squatter, the banker, the middleman and the money lender and its members cannot serve these masters and you at the same time, any more than they can serve God and Mammon.... As a minister of the Gospel, I am proud to belong to such a noble and high-minded Party [as the Labour Party]; for, in my opinion, it is the only Party that is strenuously and consistently trying to put the Christian religion into practice.<sup>39</sup>

In its editorial comment on the election campaign, the *Timaru Herald* was quite explicitly partisan in its support of Rolleston, focusing its criticisms of Carr and the Labour Party on a number of issues. In one editorial, the *Herald* accused Labour MPs of opposing the 1927 Customs Amendment Act which was intended to afford greater protection to the wheat growing industry in New Zealand, and thus of having “voted against the wheat grower.”<sup>40</sup> A couple of days later it accused the party of doing its “utmost to bring disaster to this district” over the wheat industry protection issue.<sup>41</sup> Elsewhere, editorials accused both Carr and Archer of being “cogs in the machine of the Party,” portraying the Labour Party as a dictatorial institution, whose MPs had no

<sup>36</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 20 October 1928.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*, 12 November 1928.

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*, 13 November 1928.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*, 12 November 1928.

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*, 20 October 1928.



freedom except to follow the orders of Holland and the caucus.<sup>42</sup> The newspaper sarcastically cast aspersions on Carr's knowledge of Labour's policy platforms: "Doubtless the average elector will wonder why it should be necessary for the President of the New Zealand Labour Party [Archer] to come to the rescue of the candidate who has such a superior knowledge of the Labour Party's policy? People who have listened to Mr Carr know why!"<sup>43</sup> To the extent that the *Timaru Herald* made any comments on the personalities of the candidates, they portrayed Carr as an incompetent, untrustworthy, radical outsider, and Rolleston as a brilliant, honourable and dedicated local MP. Rolleston's reserved and prudent temperament was contrasted with the "vote-catching practices of the Socialists."<sup>44</sup> Carr also came in for some personal criticism for being resident outside the electorate, the newspaper describing his non-Timaruian status as a "severe handicap."<sup>45</sup>

The candidates themselves, however, carried out the campaign in a gracious and polite manner, and on election day both men "moved among the people, and talked about the weather and other similarly important subjects... on one occasion the two candidates met in the street, shook hands heartily, and carried on a conversation with much cordiality...."<sup>46</sup> When the results were announced in the evening, Carr had polled 5547 votes to Rolleston's 5080. This gave Carr a majority of 467 votes, or 4.4 percent of the total vote. While Carr's majority was modest, the result represented a remarkable swing of almost fifteen percent towards Labour in Timaru between the 1925 and 1928 elections.

Upon the announcement of the result, Carr was carried shoulder high to the election platform. His victory speech was gracious, beginning by thanking the electors of Timaru and accepting the honour of winning "not so much personally, as for the Party which he represented." Carr then went on to thank Rolleston for a clean, fair fight, and acknowledged the high regard with which his opponent was held. Carr said that he "regretted the defeat of a gentleman like the Hon Mr Rolleston, and... had said from the commencement that if Mr Rolleston would have stood as a Labour candidate, he would have preferred to have seen him in the seat."<sup>47</sup> Having won the election, Carr seemed genuinely reluctant to accept the credit for winning the seat himself. Instead, he saw his victory as the result of the attractiveness of the policies of his party, and the "persistent

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<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*, 23 November 1928.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*, 22 October 1928.

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*, 24 October 1928.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*, 31 October 1928.

and well-directed efforts of the little band of Labour stalwarts in this constituency who had been working for years to attain the victory which had been won that day.”<sup>48</sup> Carr also acknowledged the work of Percy Vinnell at previous elections, claiming that Vinnell should be standing where he was that day.

In its coverage of election day, the *Timaru Herald* paid more attention to Rolleston’s loss than to Carr’s win. The tone of its reportage was one of surprise at the result, a sense of regret at the loss of a great politician, and an intimation that Carr had somehow been lucky to win the seat. The opinion that Rolleston’s loss was a temporary aberration, and that he would be returned at the next election was often expressed. The *Christchurch Press* described Rolleston’s defeat as “perhaps the most sensational of the General Election.”<sup>49</sup> The *Christchurch Star*, in its editorial on the election, claimed that “since the election... Timaru is greatly disgusted with itself.”<sup>50</sup> It also made the useful observation that the Timaru result demonstrated the strong appeal of Labour in urban electorates. If Labour was to be beaten in such electorates, it argued, it could only be done by United. Thus, the newspaper was tacitly describing the lack of appeal of the Reform Party for working class urban electors. The Timaru result was echoed, the *Star* noted, in other urban electorates where the absence of a United candidate had allowed a Labour candidate to defeat Reform, such as Dunedin North, Napier, Wellington East and Wellington North.

Responses to Carr’s victory among Reform supporters ranged from surprise to dismay. Rolleston received letters of commiseration from all over the country, from all kinds of people. Even Labour MP for Westland, James O’Brien, admitted that “while politically pleased at Labour’s win, I am personally very sorry for your defeat.” The letters revealed a particular disgust that Timaru had chosen “a man like Carr” in favour of Rolleston. Carr is described variously as a “nothing more nor less than an adventurer”, a “half-pie outsider”, and a “regular carpet bagger ... with [an] unsavoury past.” Former Prime Minister Sir Francis Dillon Bell described Carr as a “rotter” and a “discredited dissembling parson”, while another correspondent wrote simply, “If it had been anyone but Clyde Carr, we could have understood, but this is past comprehension.” There was a decided note of superiority in the tone of the many letter writers who described the voters of

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<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*, 15 November 1928.

<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Press*, 15 November 1928.

<sup>50</sup> *Christchurch Star*, 19 November 1928.

Timaru as ignorant, unappreciative and stupid. One wrote that “constituencies are fickle creatures and quite unmindful of benefits received or good work done”, while another put it more bluntly: “the public is an ass and will never become anything better.”<sup>51</sup> As late as 1974, Carr’s upset victory was still a sore point for conservatives in Timaru. Author George Guy wrote of the 1928 result:

To have a member of the Labour Party representing them [Timaru’s conservative interests] in parliament was indignity enough, but it was far worse when the defeated member was the son of a former Provincial Superintendent, whereas the new member was a stranger from Christchurch who conducted most of his campaign at street corners where he was known to sing with his supporters.<sup>52</sup>

Where letter writers offered something in the way of an explanation for Carr’s win, they tended towards a number of themes. There was a general sense that the national result reflected a general and growing sense of dissatisfaction with Reform. Some writers consoled Rolleston with the idea that his loss was merely the result of the government’s overly long term in power. Others believed bloc voting by Catholics, or the civil service, or both, was responsible for Carr’s win. A number of writers identified Rolleston’s supposed support for the bible-in-schools movement and prohibitionism as factors that counted against him in Timaru.<sup>53</sup> Another explanation offered in consolation to Rolleston was closer to the truth: “It is hard to realise that you who have been almost a part of Timaru should be thrust out by a person who doesn’t even live in the place! – which all goes to show what organised labour can do in a democratic town.” Indeed, Carr’s victory in Timaru in 1928 was as much the culmination of two decades of political labour organisation in the electorate as it was the result of his energetic and innovative campaigning. As illustrated in chapter three, the Timaru electorate was already demographically inclined to Labour voting, largely because of the presence of large highly unionised workforces. In addition to this, the United Party was weak in the electorate, having not stood a candidate since 1919, leaving voters

<sup>51</sup> All these letters are held in the F.J. Rolleston Papers, Canterbury Museum, Christchurch.

<sup>52</sup> George Guy, *Thomas of Timaru* (Christchurch: Pegasus, 1974), p. 83.

<sup>53</sup> In fact, while Rolleston took a moral view of indulgences like gaming and “the drink evil”, he was by no means outspoken on either issue. He actually voted against the Religious Exercises in Schools Bill in 1924,

with Labour as the single opposition party. It was these factors which set the context for Carr's victory. Carr's communication skills, personality and energetic and thoughtful campaigning allowed him to fully capitalise on the opportunity that the Timaru electorate presented to him.

Figure 4.1: Caricature of Clyde Carr by Stuart Peterson<sup>54</sup>



### 1931 Election

Carr had an easier time at the 1931 election than in 1928, as he defended the seat in his first election as an incumbent. Carr carried out his campaign in much the same way as he had done at the previous election, with the advantage of a three year track record and a much higher local profile. Carr's cause was assisted by two other external factors which helped weaken any potential conservative backlash against him. These two factors were the onset of the depression, which was turning voters towards Labour all over the country, and the division of anti-Labour forces within the Timaru electorate.

In September 1931, Prime Minister Forbes announced the formation of a coalition government in response to the ongoing and deepening economic crisis faced by the country. The intention behind the formation of the Coalition was to allow the United and Reform parties to fight Labour together at the general election in December. This created a problem at the electorate level, however, as the local United and Reform party organisations were called upon to agree on a single candidate to

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saying in Parliament that "...if you want to teach religion into the young mind the proper person to do it is the parson or the priest, not an unwilling school master." *N.Z.P.D.*, Vol. 207, 20 August 1924.

<sup>54</sup> Taken from *The Bulletin*, 25 May 1932, p. 13.

fight Labour. Nowhere did this present more of a problem than in Timaru, where, once Rolleston had decided against standing, the United and Reform organisations could not agree on a single candidate. Consequently, two candidates opposed Carr, splitting the anti-Labour vote. Carr's opponents spent as much time attacking each other as they did Labour, and on election day Carr held the seat with an increased majority.

Following Rolleston's decision to not stand for the Coalition, a number of meetings were held between United and Reform in an attempt to find a compromise candidate. The parties' attempts at agreement were unsuccessful, and on November 7, the United Party announced that Herbert Hall would oppose Carr as a Coalition-United candidate. Hall was born and educated in Christchurch, having moved to Timaru in 1907 to work as an architect. He designed a number of public and commercial buildings in the town, including the war memorial column, and gained something of a public profile for his work.<sup>55</sup> A few days later, Reform announced the candidature of Herbert Armstrong. Armstrong had moved to Timaru in January 1931. The newspaper notice placed by Reform announcing Armstrong's candidature went into some detail describing the efforts that Armstrong and Reform had gone to avoid a triangular contest in Timaru.<sup>56</sup> There was already a considerable amount of animosity between the parties at this point, and this animosity intensified and became more public as the campaign progressed.

Armstrong, not Hall, was Carr's chief opponent in the campaign. He was a superior campaigner, and aligned himself more closely with the Coalition than Hall did. The result on election day showed that the campaign had been a two-way fight, with Hall figuring only as a minor candidate. All he had achieved by standing was to spilt the anti-Labour vote and allow Carr to win the seat.

While the two Coalition candidates' parties were trying unsuccessfully to settle on a single candidate to oppose Labour, Carr had already begun his campaign. On November 13, Carr addressed a large outdoor crowd at Crown Hotel Corner. The dominant theme of Carr's speech was a thoroughgoing critique of the Coalition government's attempts to deal with the effects of the depression on the people. Carr's particular focus was on the inequality of sacrifice under the Coalition administration. In spite of the hardships being suffered by many people, Carr argued, the government had introduced wage cuts to rank and file public servants, and had reduced spending on education. The Coalition had approved extravagant spending on projects like the Auckland

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<sup>55</sup> *Timaru Post*, 26 November 1931.

Railway Station and the Tongarairo Chateau, had increased salaries and bonuses to senior public servants, and were allowing immigration to continue despite the number of unemployed New Zealand workers.<sup>57</sup> During the campaign, Carr often described the poor conditions of workers on the government's relief work schemes, then contrasted this with quotes of the untaxed dividends paid out to shareholders from highly profitable private companies.<sup>58</sup> Carr railed against the international monetary system and the strength of the big banks with radical rhetoric, referring to the "international banking octopus of America [that was] rapidly getting its tentacles upon the lifeblood of world industry."<sup>59</sup> The solutions to the problems faced by the country were, according to Carr, to be found in the policy proposals contained in Labour's manifesto. These included promising the abolition of the Arbitration Court, the establishment of a state-owned central bank, the introduction of a more equitable taxation scheme, and assisting in the development of secondary industry.

The conditions of relief workers became something of a local issue when controversy arose over the treatment of relief workers at Lindis Pass Camp. In a heated meeting of the Timaru Unemployment Committee on November 12, the chair, Mr O'Hagan, resigned after refusing to allow the use of committee funds to pay the fares of Timaru workers at Lindis Pass relief camp to get back home.<sup>60</sup> According to the unemployed men at the meeting, conditions at the camp were unacceptable, and incredibly, some workers had travelled from the camp to Timaru on foot rather than continue working there. However, O'Hagan argued that paying the men's fares while the matter was still under investigation by the government would be tantamount to inciting a strike. The next day, E.W. Hessell, a heavily indebted young man who had worked at Lindis Pass camp, confronted Joseph Coates about not being able to pay his bills because he not been paid for the work he had done at the camp. Hessell went on to describe conditions at the camp, where workers were asked to work for 7/- per week, sometimes up to their knees in water with no gumboots. According to Hessell, the sleeping quarters at the camp were inadequate and the food was "not fit for a dog". Coates' response to Hessell could hardly have been less sympathetic. He simply told Hessell that he should have stayed in the camp, related a story of the hardships he himself had

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<sup>56</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 10 November 1931.

<sup>57</sup> *Timaru Post*, 17 November 1931.

<sup>58</sup> *ibid.*, 18 November 1931.

<sup>59</sup> *ibid.*, 19 November 1931.

<sup>60</sup> *ibid.*, 12 November 1931.

suffered as a young man, and told the audience that the government was doing all it could for the unemployed with the tax revenue it had at its disposal. There were cries of "shame" from some audience members in response to Coates' speech.<sup>61</sup> Coates had provided all the evidence Carr could have hoped for of the Coalition's lack of sympathy for the unemployed.

Carr made a point of emphasising his diligent service to the electorate during his first term as MP: "I have missed no known opportunity for service, for that was my idea and ideal of Parliamentary representation, as of all life."<sup>62</sup> At South School, in a strongly Labour-voting area, Carr was thanked for securing a grant for a new school building.<sup>63</sup> Carr even received an endorsement of sorts from the mayor, who chaired Carr's final meeting at Scottish Hall, praising him for being willing to do whatever was asked of him in the interests of Timaru.<sup>64</sup> Carr's emphasis on his service to the electorate during his first term marked the beginning of the most important and consistent theme in his campaign style. At every subsequent election, Carr made a point of listing his achievements on behalf of the electorate.

Typically, Carr distinguished himself from his opponents through his personality and campaign style. He held a number of large outdoor meetings in the town centre which were highly accessible to audiences because of their convenient time and location, and attracted large crowds. In comparison to the dry and self-important Hall, Carr appeared very much in sympathy with those suffering under depression conditions. Newspaper reports of Carr's meetings refer to him "driving his points home with homely illustrations which the audience were quick to appreciate."<sup>65</sup>

Coalition-Reform candidate Armstrong's policy advocacy followed fairly closely official Coalition policy of reducing offshore debt, favouring public work schemes over an unemployment benefit, and group settlement of undeveloped land. Armstrong advocated a more flexible Arbitration Court, and continued protection for the wheat and flour industry.<sup>66</sup> At his opening meeting at the Scottish Hall, Armstrong related a story that served to show the personal animosity that existed between the two anti-Labour candidates. According to Armstrong, he had passed Hall on the street before the campaign had begun, and Hall had told him that if he (Armstrong) was chosen by the Coalition cabinet to stand in Timaru, then Hall would run against him regardless.

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<sup>61</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 27 November 1931.

<sup>62</sup> *Timaru Post*, 14 November 1931.

<sup>63</sup> *ibid.*, 1 December 1931.

<sup>64</sup> *ibid.*, 2 December 1931.

<sup>65</sup> *ibid.*, 23 November 1931.

Accused by an audience member at the Scottish Hall meeting of dishonestly representing himself as the official Coalition candidate, Armstrong answered by admitting that he was not an official candidate, but that he did support the Coalition.<sup>67</sup> A week later, at West End, Armstrong was again asked about the triangular contest, and he again voiced his full support for Coalition policy. Armstrong's support for the Coalition was in contrast to Hall's, who at this stage of the campaign had already stated rather flippantly that the Coalition did not know its own policy.<sup>68</sup> Another factor that distinguished Armstrong from Hall was the former's willingness to confront the issue of the unemployment. Armstrong addressed this issue at almost all of his meetings, even if it were simply to reiterate his opposition to the dole system and his belief that the unemployed should be made to work on public works.<sup>69</sup> At Pareora, he emphasised the need for the country to find a solution to the problem of rising levels of unemployment and argued that one of the major benefits of a policy of group settlement would be that it would provide a useful outlet for unemployed labour.<sup>70</sup> By contrast, Hall had very little to say about the unemployment problem, or the conditions of the unemployed, whom he refused to treat as "a class apart".<sup>71</sup>

By the end of the campaign, Armstrong and Hall were spending more energy fighting each other than Carr. Both candidates ran full column public notices in an issue of the *Timaru Post* attacking each other for various statements made in speeches during the campaign.<sup>72</sup> In the same issue of the newspaper, each ran a large display advertisement. The first pictured Hall with George Forbes, Prime Minister and leader of the United Party, with the caption, "The Prime Minister, on his way to Dunedin, greets Mr Herbert Hall, our candidate at Timaru." The advertisement also featured large portraits of Forbes, Coates and Hall, and was a fairly transparent attempt to portray Hall as the officially endorsed Coalition candidate.<sup>73</sup> Armstrong's advertisement ran on the front page of the newspaper, and protested Hall's "unfair" use of the photo of himself with Forbes. Armstrong's advertisement also featured a facsimile of a telegram from Forbes that confirmed that he had no knowledge of Hall's use of the photo in his election campaign.

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<sup>66</sup> *ibid.*, 18 November 1931.

<sup>67</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *ibid.*, 23 November 1931.

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.*, 18 November 1931.

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*, 20 November 1931.

<sup>71</sup> *ibid.*, 1 December 1931.

<sup>72</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> *ibid.*



Coalition-United Herbert Hall's campaign was the last to begin, a week after Armstrong's and nine days after Carr's. Hall's late start was the result of his decision to delay opening his campaign until the Prime Minister had made his policy speech.<sup>74</sup> Hall must later have regretted this decision as it left him with just two weeks in which to campaign, and he seemed unimpressed with Forbes' speech in any case. When Hall did open his campaign at Caroline Bay on November 21, it was heralded by the *Timaru Post* as one of largest ever political meetings in Timaru, attended by 800 people. The newspaper emphatically endorsed Hall's candidature: "here was a man whose exposition of the financial problems easily eclipsed that of any man who has dealt with politics in Timaru for years... He is indisputably the only candidate in the field for Timaru who possesses a political vision beyond that of a roads and bridges politician."<sup>75</sup> The report included a detailed description of Hall's speech, which amounted to three and a half columns of dense economic argument, an in-depth discussion of currency standards and the exchange rate. This must surely have made for a tedious speech for the large crowd present. Given the questions asked of him, most of the audience were more interested in Reform and United's inability to cooperate than the amortisation of foreign debt. Hall did his best to evade this question, simply restating his belief that Timaruvians had the right to the widest and best possible range of candidates.<sup>76</sup> In fact, at almost all of their meetings, both Hall and Armstrong were questioned over their failure to avoid a triangular contest. At one of Hall's meetings, an audience member claimed that the Labour Party had decided not to interfere in his campaign, as his campaign was assisting Carr by splitting Armstrong's vote.<sup>77</sup>

Hall's attitude towards the Coalition was ambivalent at best. When asked about Coalition policy, he said, "seeing as they don't know it themselves, it is not possible for me to give it."<sup>78</sup> Hall made several other politically naïve policy statements during the campaign, for example when he asserted that too much money was being spent on education, or that, despite their suffering, the unemployed must not be considered "a class apart."<sup>79</sup> Hall often came across as not only

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<sup>74</sup> *ibid.*, 14 November 1931.

<sup>75</sup> *ibid.*, 23 November 1931.

<sup>76</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> *ibid.*, 25 November 1931.

<sup>78</sup> *ibid.*, 23 November 1931.

<sup>79</sup> *ibid.*, 25 November and 1 December 1931.

insensitive, but positively egotistical, at one point speaking unapologetically of his own “superiority complex.”<sup>80</sup>

The division among conservative groups within Timaru went beyond the candidates and local party organisations to include the two local newspapers, the *Timaru Herald* and the *Timaru Post*. The *Herald* explicitly supported Armstrong, the *Post* Hall, and there was tension between the two newspapers over their partisanship. This rivalry came to a head in the wake of Reform leader Coates’ speech at the Little Playhouse, which was criticised by the *Post* as being a tacit Coalition endorsement of Armstrong. The editorial described Coates’ meeting as “spontaneous and ill-advised”, and criticised the *Herald* for omitting from its report of the meeting Coates’ caveat that it the Coalition did not officially endorse either candidate.<sup>81</sup> The next day, the *Herald* responded to the *Post*’s attacks:

It is only too obvious that the outburst of anger by the local journalistic supporter of Mr Hall, is not so much due to our hard worked reporter’s little lapse, but the attack is offered as a counter blast to our expressed opinion that Mr Armstrong has the better chance of defeating Labour.<sup>82</sup>

In other editorials, the *Herald* was more explicitly partisan, repeatedly asking its readers to vote for Armstrong to avoid the defeat by Labour of both “moderate” candidates.<sup>83</sup> At times, the *Timaru Herald* was more critical of Hall than it was of Carr. The tone of its editorial description of Hall’s opening speech, for example, was a combination of mocking and serious criticism:

we rather fancy that if Mr Hall desires to be understood by the average elector who has a vote to cast, he will be compelled to descend from the polished counters of high finance and vacate the exclusive chairs of the economic theorists, and come right down to the breakfast table of the everyday citizen. The Parliament of New Zealand is not a lace for the theorist;

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<sup>80</sup> *ibid.*, 3 December 1931.

<sup>81</sup> *ibid.*, 27 November 1931.

<sup>82</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 28 November 1931.

<sup>83</sup> *ibid.*, 27 November 1931.

what is needed to-day is men of everyday experience, human sympathy and commonsense.<sup>84</sup>

The *Post*, too, was highly partisan right from the beginning, often emphasising the importance of having a "local man" as a representative. This was meant to be read as an endorsement of Hall, the candidate who had lived in Timaru the longest. According to the newspaper, the people of Timaru had had

one experience of the folly of acclaiming a stranger. To-day they are resolved that no-one, either one of their own number or of Wellington, shall be allowed to bring in another such stranger. 'Timaru for Timaruvians!' is the current catchword... If the sitting member is to be ejected, and it is high time he was, he will be given his conge by one whose permanent address is Timaru, and whose occupation, substance, standing and repute are known to all.<sup>85</sup>

The *Post* was not above veiled attacks on Carr's character either, as its editorial on the eve of the election showed, when it asked whether Timaru would continue to "consort with a Socialist" after "three years' bitter experience of representation by a man who, to put it mildly, is more reverend in the title that he claims than in his habits or manners...."<sup>86</sup> This was an early reference to the accusations about Carr's personal life which emerged commonly through his career.

On election day, Carr won 46.7 percent of the vote, increasing his majority to 820 votes. Armstrong won 41.1 percent of the vote, and Hall just 10.4 percent. Armstrong and Hall's combined vote was 345 votes higher than Carr's. Once his reelection had been confirmed, Carr was carried along Sophia Street on the shoulders of the crowd. In his speech he thanked his fellow candidates for a clean fight, and reiterated his pledge to work as an effective constituency MP: "as your member I will endeavour to serve all ranks, classes and individuals in my constituency impartially." Once again, Carr thanked his campaign committee, stating that the victory was not

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<sup>84</sup> *ibid.*, 24 November 1931.

<sup>85</sup> *Timaru Post*, 31 October 1931.

<sup>86</sup> *ibid.*, 1 December 1931.

his but theirs. Hall was less than gracious in defeat, putting his loss down to an unsuccessful attempt to “teach Timaru the value of a superiority complex.”<sup>87</sup>

The 1931 election saw several factors outside Carr’s control work in his favour. The most important of these was the inability of the conservative parties in Timaru to agree upon a single candidate to oppose him. Also, the national tide of opinion was swinging towards Labour, largely as a result of the Coalition’s lack of effective solutions to the country’s economic crisis. Carr’s constituency work during his first term as MP certainly won him some support, or at least strengthened his existing support. Once again, Carr conducted a more extensive and effective campaign than either of his opponents. Newspaper meeting notices show that Carr held twenty-seven meetings on seventeen days, in comparison to Armstrong’s twenty-five meetings on fifteen days and Hall’s seventeen meetings on nine days. As well as covering the outlying areas of the electorate, Carr addressed his core areas of support with outdoor meetings at the Crown Hotel and the Smithfield Freezing Works.

### 1935 Election

The 1935 election saw Labour sweep to power, and Carr comfortably hold the Timaru seat, increasing his majority to over one thousand votes. A number of factors which emerged at this election would also characterise later campaigns: the poor quality of the conservative candidate, the strength of Labour organisation in Timaru, and Carr’s growing confidence as a politician.

In the wake of the triangular contest at the 1931 election, the Reform and United party organisations in Timaru agreed to amalgamate into one “anti-Socialist” political organisation. However, despite the establishment of such a group in August 1932, a dispute over the 1935 Coalition candidacy arose regardless. In May 1935 W. Angland, a former mayor of Timaru, announced his candidacy for the seat in the upcoming election. The anti-Socialist group formed in 1932 was caught unawares by Angland’s announcement, and nominated William Thomas to stand in the seat. Angland was angry that Thomas was trying to “pinch his platform”, but eventually, after a public and protracted debate between supporters of both nominees, Angland withdrew and Thomas was announced as the official candidate.<sup>88</sup> As former rector of Timaru Boys’ High School, Thomas was a prominent Timaruvian and had the backing of many business and professional men

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<sup>87</sup> *ibid.*, 3 December 1931.

<sup>88</sup> Guy, *Thomas of Timaru*, pp. 84-86.

in the town and the Rotary Club.<sup>89</sup> However, while Thomas was a capable man, he was a poorly suited to the mood of the time. Neither Thomas nor his friends were affected by the depression, and he and his wife had “attained what might be described as ‘ringside seats’ in Timaru Society.”<sup>90</sup> Furthermore, Thomas had no previous experience in political campaigning, either at local or central government level.

Thomas was a social conservative and had a tendency to sound moralistic and patronising in his speeches. He was a tee-totaller, though he denied that he was a prohibitionist or opposed to betting.<sup>91</sup> He actively supported the socially conservative bible-in-schools movement, whose supporters had recently introduced the Religious Instruction in Public Schools Bill to Parliament.<sup>92</sup> Thomas’s conservatism, political inexperience and lack of “common touch” showed in his insensitivity towards and ignorance of the issue of unemployment. At Waimataitai, he angered some members of his audience by arguing that civil servants on low wages were just as badly off as the unemployed.<sup>93</sup> Where Thomas made specific policy promises, these too were poorly judged, given the largely urban nature of the Timaru electorate. His main policy focus was on the importance of developing primary industry, and at one point he argued that New Zealand should not increase its secondary industry until the population had increased to two or three times its current level.<sup>94</sup> This was in marked contrast to Carr’s frequent statements on the urgent need for New Zealand to develop its secondary industries, and for that industry to be located in secondary centres such as Timaru. Rather than offer novel policy proposals to deal with the country’s dire economic situation, Thomas simply promised more of the same, emphasising the economic expertise of the Coalition.<sup>95</sup> The *Timaru Post* generally did a more effective job of announcing National’s criticisms of Labour’s policy than Thomas, describing Labour as “political quacks hawking elixirs with attractive trade names like ‘money service at cost’, ‘guaranteed prices’ and so forth.”<sup>96</sup>

One of the most striking features of the campaign was the highly organised and vocal opposition that Thomas faced from Labour supporters at his meetings. At a special meeting for women at the

<sup>89</sup> *Timaru Post*, 6 November 1935.

<sup>90</sup> Guy, *Thomas of Timaru*, pp. 86-90.

<sup>91</sup> *Timaru Post*, 20 and 26 November 1935.

<sup>92</sup> *ibid.*, 21 November 1935.

<sup>93</sup> *ibid.*, 14 November 1935.

<sup>94</sup> *ibid.*, 25 November 1935.

<sup>95</sup> *ibid.*, 26 November 1935.

<sup>96</sup> *ibid.*, 25 November 1935.

Y.W.C.A., Thomas faced his most adversarial and demanding audience. The most provocative questions put to him betrayed an obvious loyalty to the Labour Party and showed the influence of Carr's political bias and interests; for example when Thomas was asked why, if socialism would lead to economic disaster, there was no unemployment in Russia.<sup>97</sup> At the close of Thomas' meeting at South End, two audience members attempted to pass a motion that the audience express its regret that Mr Thomas, who had done so much for the community in the past, had aligned himself with the "reactionary party" lead by Forbes and Coates.<sup>98</sup> The motion was lost, but the episode must have been humiliating for Thomas. At Thomas' last meeting at the Theatre Royal, there were loud calls for "Joe Savage" by Labour supporters present.<sup>99</sup> The local Labour Party organisation did not limit their disruptive tactics to just the local candidate's meetings. When Forbes addressed an audience at the Theatre Royal, there were many sarcastic groans and wisecracks as he described the government's record over its last term, and the

intermittent barrage of heckling... keyed the audience to an unusual pitch of excitement several times, when the concerted fire of interjection drowned out the sound of Mr Forbes' voice. The Mayor, Mr T.W. Satterthwaite, chairman, exasperated by the noisy demonstration, in an endeavour to stem the rising tide of heckling attempted to appeal for a fair hearing for the P.M., but only succeeded in provoking increased uproar, which finally submerged his plea in a crashing flood of pandemonium.<sup>100</sup>

At the end of the meeting the mayor criticised the crowd for not hearing Forbes fairly, and noted that Savage had been treated completely differently at his meeting ten days earlier. This comment was greeted with more shouting, and a voice from the crowd asked, "Why don't you kiss him?"<sup>101</sup>

Carr's audiences, on the other hand, were generally attentive. Carr had the confidence of a candidate who was established in his seat and had the national tide of opinion swinging in favour of his party, and spoke passionately on the need for radical reform of the monetary system. He promised the establishment of a central reserve bank that would make interest-free loans available

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<sup>97</sup> *ibid.*, 21 November 1935.

<sup>98</sup> *ibid.*, 22 November 1935.

<sup>99</sup> *ibid.*, 27 November 1935.

<sup>100</sup> *ibid.*, 23 November 1935.

<sup>101</sup> *ibid.*

to the people.<sup>102</sup> Carr also spoke on the need to develop New Zealand's secondary industry and transport infrastructure. Carr saw the potential benefits that such a policy could bring to Timaru in terms of manufacturing and use of the port.<sup>103</sup> Carr's policy statements were not limited to economic development, however. He also dealt with social policy issues, stressing the need to keep the school entry age at five to keep teachers in work and help foster a sense of community, and his opposition to the Religious Instruction in Public Schools Bill, arguing that it was the responsibility of the church, not the state, to educate children on religion. Carr quipped that the recitation of the Lord's Prayer in schools was an exercise in repetition, not devotion.<sup>104</sup>

Most importantly, Carr reminded his electors of the diligent and non-partisan work he had performed for the people of Timaru over his seven years as their representative:

Clyde Carr has never turned a deaf ear to any request for assistance in securing homes, jobs, pensions or any form of relief. It has not been unusual for him to dispatch 20 letters and more a day. He has received hundreds of acknowledgements from individuals, associations, and local bodies of his unfailing courtesy and consideration, his promptitude and persistence in all matters referred to him by rich and poor, friend and foe. He has placed the cause of the destitute and afflicted above his private interests and his personal dignity.<sup>105</sup>

The 1935 result in Timaru saw Carr consolidate his hold on the Timaru seat, and enjoy the benefits of a nationwide swing in favour of his party. His majority was 1059, or 8.8 percent of the total vote in Timaru.

Through the early and mid 1930s, Carr advanced up the ranks of the parliamentary Labour Party. In 1931 and 1932 he was active in travelling outside Timaru speaking on behalf of the party, assisting at the Motueka by-election and in the formation of Labour Party branches in Oamaru, Geraldine and Temuka.<sup>106</sup> Carr had sought election to the vice presidency of the party at least

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<sup>102</sup> *ibid.*, 7 November 1935.

<sup>103</sup> *ibid.*, 11, 14 and 19 November 1935.

<sup>104</sup> *ibid.*, 21 November 1935.

<sup>105</sup> *ibid.*, 23 November 1935.

<sup>106</sup> Minutes of National Executive of New Zealand Labour Party, 1931 and 1932.

twice before he eventually won the job in 1933. As vice president, Carr was required to undertake more travel outside the electorate, and in August 1933 he was successful in settling a procedural dispute between the Kaitanga branch and the Otago L.R.C. in Dunedin.<sup>107</sup>

Although he failed to win a second term as vice president, at the 1936 conference Carr was elected party president. Carr's responsibilities as president saw him travel the length and breadth of the country, addressing meetings, assisting at by-elections and helping to form new branches. Carr's childhood experience of life on the road and his excellent speaking skills were invaluable during this time. His outspokenness caused some problems, however. Towards the end of his term as president, in December 1936, Carr made a controversial speech from Timaru in which he referred to the National Party as "ultra-reactionaries with Fascist sympathies". In the speech he made veiled threats to Arbitration Court judges and other civil servants who were not cooperating with the new Labour government:

Referring to industrial legislation, [Carr] said that though the results in many cases left much to be desired, these were merely difficulties that remained to be overcome either by change in the personnel of certain administrative and judicial positions or by an assumption of more direct power by the government itself.<sup>108</sup>

It was easy to imagine, Carr said, the fate of those senior civil servants who "had become inoculated with conservative ideals, and found it difficult to adapt themselves to the new spirit and the new ideals." In its editorial the next day, the *Dominion* claimed that Carr and Labour were planning to destroy the independence of the Arbitration Court and "reduce it to the status of a rubber-stamp for the government." The editorial made a great deal out of the implications of Carr's suggestion, arguing that it would reduce officers of the Crown to "automatons" and that the civil life of the nation would be "brought under the tutelage of trade union dictatorship."<sup>109</sup>

Carr's presidential address to the 1937 conference concerned itself mostly with the economic and social policy achievements of the first Labour government. His radicalism and idealism emerged in his discussion of world affairs, however:

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<sup>107</sup> Minutes of National Executive of New Zealand Labour Party, 16 August 1933.

<sup>108</sup> *Dominion*, 3 December 1936.

<sup>109</sup> *ibid.*, 4 December 1936.



It is only by the workers of the world uniting for liberty and peace that the war-mongers – big business, high finance and their slave press – with Church and State in the old bad sense to aid and abet them, can be enslaved or themselves set free for the common good, the growing good of man.<sup>110</sup>

At the end of his address, Carr also made an oblique plea to be considered for a cabinet position:

Our only regret is that some of us have been unable to participate in the effort and contribute to the result to the extent desired. Our Ministers have, perhaps more or less inevitably, taken too much on themselves, with a resultant shortening of lives of great usefulness, while some of us less deserving have been spared to an unwelcome degree.<sup>111</sup>

To his disappointment, Carr was never seriously considered for a cabinet position, and his single term as president proved to be the highest office he attained within the Labour Party. In 1935 and 1938, Carr was almost immediately deleted from cabinet consideration by Savage.<sup>112</sup>

### **The Labour Party in Timaru**

The Labour Party organisation in Timaru was, for the most part, active and adequately funded. There seems to have been plenty of logistical support for Carr during his campaigns, and strong financial support from the unions within the L.R.C. If anything, the electoral strength of the local party probably contributed to its culture of vigorous internal debate. In contrast, political organisation among conservatives in Timaru was very poor. The failure of the local United and Reform parties to coordinate was a major factor in Carr's win in 1931, and in the post-war period the National Party was under-funded, unenthusiastic and in apparent disarray.

Through the 1930s, Labour Party branch meetings were well attended and membership remained strong. The general political attitudes of the branch seem to have been fairly compatible with Carr's, and there was healthy debate within the branch in the late 1930s on issues such as

<sup>110</sup> *New Zealand Labour Party Annual Conference Report*, 1937, p.2.

<sup>111</sup> *ibid.*, 1937, p. 3.

<sup>112</sup> Barry Gustafson, *From the Cradle to the Grave : A Biography of Michael Joseph Savage* (Auckland: Reed Methuen, 1986), p. 177.

education, international relations and pacifism. Even as attendance at branch meetings gradually declined through the 1940s, Carr remained firmly in control of the branch.<sup>113</sup> Disputes occasionally arose within the local party, however. The first and most major of these during Carr's term arose over the Labour candidacy for the Timaru mayoralty in 1935. A local Labour man, A.M. Patterson, ran for the mayoralty against the official Labour candidate, G.T. Koller. At the election, Patterson polled higher than Koller, and the latter lost his £10 deposit.<sup>114</sup> The resulting dispute between the two men continued for at least a year and eventually required intervention from head office. Patterson claimed that Koller's nomination had been irregular, and was unrepentant, referring to Koller as an "obnoxious person." Carr sided with Patterson on the issue, accusing Koller of seeking "personal aggrandisement."<sup>115</sup> The dispute left a strong legacy of discontent within the branch, with Koller bringing the matter up at every opportunity. In August, the Labour Party National Executive sent party president Walter Nash to Timaru to resolve the dispute, but his efforts must have been unsuccessful because in May 1936 the matter was still "live", the executive having set up a subcommittee to investigate.<sup>116</sup> The subcommittee's report concluded that Patterson had violated the constitution by standing against Koller for the mayoralty, but that "the lack of co-operation in Timaru is based upon even more deeply rooted causes than even the correspondence [between the national executive and various interested parties and individuals in Timaru] reveals."<sup>117</sup>

Local disputes continued to arise within the Timaru branch, as in March 1938 when a local member McKee was expelled after a disagreement over Labour policy on secular education.<sup>118</sup> McKee later shifted allegiance to John A. Lee's Democratic Soldiers' Labour Party. Carr himself was the centre of controversy in August 1937 when unspecified "moral" rumours that were circulating about Carr were discussed at a branch meeting. A movement that the matter be referred to the L.R.C. for further investigation failed.<sup>119</sup> The effect of Carr's association with Lee on the local party is described in the section on Carr and Lee in chapter five.

<sup>113</sup> Michael Bassett's notes from Timaru Labour Party Branch Minute Books. Unfortunately, the minute books of the Timaru branch of the Labour Party are missing. Michael Bassett took notes from them in the 1960s, and believes they were deposited in the Auckland University Library. However, the library does not hold them. Bassett kindly allowed use of his notes for this thesis.

<sup>114</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 9 May 1935.

<sup>115</sup> Michael Bassett's notes from Timaru Labour Party Branch Minute Books, 11 May 1935.

<sup>116</sup> *ibid.*, 9 August 1935.

<sup>117</sup> Minutes of National Executive of New Zealand Labour Party, 14 May 1936.

<sup>118</sup> Michael Bassett's notes from Timaru Labour Party Branch Minute Books, 26 March 1938.

<sup>119</sup> *ibid.*, 28 August 1937.

## 1938 Election

The 1938 election saw the peak both of Carr's popularity in Timaru and Labour's popularity nationally. Labour took fifty-three seats and 55.8 percent of the national vote, and Carr increased his majority to 17.7 percent of the total vote in Timaru, the largest of his career. In his campaigning, Carr focused on Labour's social welfare proposals, received widespread praise for his constituency work, and continued his strident criticism of the big banks, privileged classes and the newly formed National Party.

If Carr's previous opponents had suffered from being authoritarian and failing to grasp issues of importance to common people, then the 1938 National Party candidate, William Hall, was no exception. Hall was a sitting Borough Councillor who had lived in Timaru since his infancy. He prided himself on having received no education other than primary school and the "school of hard knocks". Hall's image of himself as a "self-made man" informed his thrifty and disciplinarian views: for example, he opposed government borrowing on the grounds that in his own life, "what I could not afford I did without."<sup>120</sup> Elsewhere, Hall advocated compulsory military training and drilling (but not on Sundays).<sup>121</sup> During his campaign, Hall expressed a number of chauvinist opinions regarding race and gender roles. He believed that teaching mothering skills to girls was essential in order to increase New Zealand's population as a defence against the "hungry hordes of Asia", complaining that "at present a girl is taught everything but her real job in life, to be a home maker."<sup>122</sup> He later stressed the importance of National's family allowance as a way of increasing the country's population, which was "the hope for a future white New Zealand."<sup>123</sup>

Hall's strength was in his criticism of Labour policy, rather than his exposition of his own party's ideals. He argued that Labour's trade protection policies had failed to build industry, and that Labour's generous unemployment relief had now made it hard for farmers to find labourers, as the labourers would rather receive a government benefit than work.<sup>124</sup> The latter comment would not have won Hall many voters among unemployed farm labourers. Hall accused Labour of being unduly influenced by union officials, and described compulsory unionism as a racket to benefit the

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<sup>120</sup> *Timaru Post*, 4 October 1938.

<sup>121</sup> *ibid.*, 13 October 1938.

<sup>122</sup> *ibid.*, 27 September 1938.

<sup>123</sup> *ibid.*, 8 October 1938.

<sup>124</sup> *ibid.*, 1 and 3 October 1938.

“official class” of labour.<sup>125</sup> The local Labour Party organisation continued its tactic of tough questioning and disruptions at Hall’s meetings in 1938. At both Scottish Hall and West End, Hall was confronted over the closing of Timaru Woollen Mills under National during the depression.<sup>126</sup> Hall faced another tough, argumentative audience at Pareora, when he attempted to make political mileage out of Carr’s involvement with Lee.<sup>127</sup>

The high point of the National campaign in Timaru came when a massive rally held at the Timaru Showgrounds was addressed by party leader Adam Hamilton and the National candidates for the three South Canterbury electorates. The rally was attended by an estimated three thousand people.<sup>128</sup> Each of the speakers emphasised the benefits of private enterprise, low taxes, competition and private ownership, as opposed to Labour’s “risky socialistic experiments.” Although the attendance at the rally was very impressive, it is possible that many in attendance were not there entirely of their own volition. The previous day, Carr had warned his audiences against employee intimidation to attend the rally, and a letter to the editor on the day following the rally described the meeting as lacking animation and having a “funereal air.”<sup>129</sup>

Carr opened his campaign with a meeting at the Scottish Hall, contrasting the wage cuts introduced by the Coalition with Labour’s successful implementation of the guaranteed price scheme and wage restorations. Carr claimed that anything good in National Party policy had been taken from Labour’s platform, and that Labour’s record over the last three years in overcoming the worst economic and social effects of the depression spoke for itself.<sup>130</sup> Throughout the campaign, Carr was strongly critical of the behaviour of the banks during the depression, stressed the need to expand New Zealand’s internal market to reduce the country’s reliance on imports, and spoke in detail about Labour’s proposed social security scheme.<sup>131</sup>

During the campaign, Carr was frequently thanked for his work for the electorate over his first two terms as MP. At Gleniti, the chair of the meeting paid tribute to Carr’s efforts in procuring improvements to the local school.<sup>132</sup> At Scottish Hall, the mayor thanked Carr for his hard work

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<sup>125</sup> *ibid.*, 6 October 1938.

<sup>126</sup> *ibid.*, 27 and 29 September 1938.

<sup>127</sup> *ibid.*, 13 October 1938.

<sup>128</sup> *ibid.*, 11 October 1938.

<sup>129</sup> *ibid.*, 11 and 12 October 1938.

<sup>130</sup> *ibid.*, 21 September 1938.

<sup>131</sup> *ibid.*, 27 and 21 September 1938.

<sup>132</sup> *ibid.*, 10 October 1938.

for the electorate.<sup>133</sup> Towards the end of the campaign, Carr ran an ad which emphasised his constituency service:

During the past ten years I have endeavored to carry out the ideals [of Christianity] in my individual relationships with my constituents and as member of the Labour Party... Irrespective, moreover, of party affiliations, my people have enjoyed my impartial championship and unstinted service. I could do no other.<sup>134</sup>

Some of the benefits of Carr's "unstinted service" were slow to materialise, however, and he was only able to answer with further promises audience questions about when Timaru would get its own radio station and a new police station.<sup>135</sup>

Carr faced a number of difficult audiences and opposition to his radical political statements, in particular his association with Lee. At the National stronghold of Highfield, the large audience expressed their dissatisfaction with Labour with a great deal of foot stomping and hostile questioning over price rises, the lack of military preparations for war and increased taxes.<sup>136</sup> At Otipua, hostile questioning over the implications of Labour's policies for farmers went on for so long that Carr's next meeting started late.<sup>137</sup> A particularly combative letter to the editor described Carr as a "pronounced extremist," who was rumoured to be *persona non grata* with both the local party and the parliamentary party organisations. The writer referred specifically to Carr's aspirations to be "J.A. Lee's lieutenant", quoting Carr as saying he would follow Lee to "the hot place".<sup>138</sup> The degree of animosity that had built up during the campaign boiled over on the final night of the campaign, when Carr's and Hall's were held in venues across the road from one another. After the meetings, some of Carr's supporters booed Hall as he closed his meeting.<sup>139</sup>

On election night, Carr's victory speech was uncharacteristically bitter: "It is customary on these occasions to thank the other side on a good clean fight but I am sorry I cannot do that tonight." He described the National Party's campaign as appealing to fear and ignorance, and of being full of

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<sup>133</sup> *ibid.*, 21 September 1938.

<sup>134</sup> *ibid.*, 14 October 1938.

<sup>135</sup> *ibid.*, 24 September 1938.

<sup>136</sup> *ibid.*, 30 September 1938.

<sup>137</sup> *ibid.*, 14 October 1938.

<sup>138</sup> *ibid.*, 11 October 1938.

<sup>139</sup> *ibid.*, 15 October 1938.

“calumny, misrepresentation and falsehood.”<sup>140</sup> Hall then appeared on stage to loud booing, and said that while he had planned to come on stage and thank Carr on a good clean fight, after Carr’s remarks he could no longer do so, claiming “tonight you have seen the real Clyde Carr.” There was more booing as Hall left the stage.

### **Carr’s Policy Interests**

In both his campaigning and his parliamentary speaking, Carr’s key policy concerns remained fairly consistent across his career. They were industrial development, international relations, social justice, broadcasting, literature and the arts.

Carr pushed a number of themes regarding the development of secondary industry in New Zealand, all involving various forms of government intervention and protection of local manufacturing. Aside from the most obvious forms of government assistance to industry such as trade barriers and subsidies, Carr suggested other ways in which government programmes could encourage the development of manufacturing. These included funding scientific research which may lead to the development of new industries, introducing schemes to encourage the public to buy locally produced goods, and the extension and coordination of the transport infrastructure of the country.<sup>141</sup> Carr also urged that the government do all it could to decentralise industry away from the main centres. The trend towards the centralisation of industry and population, and the gradual migration of population northwards were recognised by Carr as highly damaging to his electorate.

Carr would often discuss potential new industries in parliament, industries as diverse as the flax industry, fellmongery, possum trapping, pulp and paper, tobacco, aluminium smelting, coal carbonisation, tourism, and the steel industry. The corollary to Carr’s emphasis on the importance of developing secondary industry was his criticism of the conservative parties for favouring the farmer at the expense of the rest of the country. He described the United government in August 1929 as being like the Cyclops, “seeing nothing in the future of the country but sheep.”<sup>142</sup> Social Credit monetary reform was a major economic theme in Carr’s parliamentary speeches in the 1930s.<sup>143</sup> This too was strongly related to his concern with the development of secondary industry.

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<sup>140</sup> *ibid.*, 17 October 1938.

<sup>141</sup> *N.Z.P.D.*, Vol. 222, 9 August 1929.

<sup>142</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. 222, 27 August 1929.

<sup>143</sup> For example *ibid.*, Vol. 228, 16 July 1931.

Carr saw government issue of cheap credit as a potential means of increasing the purchasing power of the public, and building the internal market for New Zealand manufactured goods.

The second of Carr's key areas of interest was the peace movement and international relations. Throughout his career, Carr voiced his strong and often unorthodox views on issues such as opening up New Zealand's relations with Communist countries, especially the U.S.S.R.; self-determination for colonial countries; and opposition to Cold War militarism and nuclear proliferation. Early in his parliamentary career, Carr was a strident critic of New Zealand's colonial administration of Samoa. While Carr's attitude towards the Samoans themselves was paternalistic to say the least, he argued forcefully for their self-government, and the removal of the New Zealand administration, claiming that "to set a military man the task of governing the Samoans is analogous to setting a prison warden the task of managing a kindergarten."<sup>144</sup>

Despite his involvement with the peace movement and pressure from conscientious objectors' organisations,<sup>145</sup> Carr was one of many long-time anti-militarists within the Labour caucus who did not oppose the introduction of conscription by the Labour government in 1940.<sup>146</sup> In fact, far from opposing conscription during World War Two, Carr actually signed up, and served one and a half years of home service.<sup>147</sup> A soldier who served alongside Carr in the Seventh Canterbury Regiment at this time remembers Carr resembling Ghandi because of his wiry frame and the fact he wore shorts most of the time.<sup>148</sup> Carr drew upon his experience in the army and his influence as an MP to campaign for better conditions for rank-and-file soldiers, and attacked the class privilege he observed within the army, where "selection is made for officers from the O.T.C. (Officers' Training Corps) and the O.S.T.B. (Old School Tie Brigade)."<sup>149</sup> He also spoke out against what he saw as undue jingoism during wartime, attracting strong protest in August 1941 for a speech in parliament which ridiculed the proposal that children should salute the flag in class.<sup>150</sup>

The international issue foremost in Carr's mind was his desire for closer trade relations between New Zealand and the U.S.S.R. Carr was a strong supporter of the young Soviet Union, and saw the

<sup>144</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. 222, 5 September 1929.

<sup>145</sup> Lincoln Efford to Clyde Carr, 6 July 1942, Lincoln Efford Papers, MS-Papers-445-26, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

<sup>146</sup> David Grant, "Anti-Conscription, Conscription and the Referendum," in *Peter Fraser: Master Politician*, ed. Margaret Clark (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1998), p. 135.

<sup>147</sup> *Press*, 19 September 1962.

<sup>148</sup> Noel Bell to Colin Brown, 20 February 1996.

<sup>149</sup> A.W. McKay to Stephen Kerr, 20 May 2001; Dianne Bardsley, *The Land Girls: In a Man's World, 1939-1946* (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 2000), p. 28; *N.Z.P.D.*, Vol. 262, 4 March 1943.

<sup>150</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. 260, 8 August 1941.

U.S.S.R. as a model for a new and better world to develop out of the Second World War.<sup>151</sup> Support for the Soviet Union was a problematic issue within the Labour Party, as its leadership was highly sensitive to potentially electorally damaging accusations of being Communist sympathisers. In 1933, the Labour Party conference voted to investigate the activities of the Friends of the Soviet Union, which was suspected of being a front organisation for the Communist Party. After a long and heated debate at the 1934 Conference, membership of the F.S.U. was deemed incompatible with Labour Party membership.<sup>152</sup> While it is not clear whether Carr was a member of the F.S.U., he was certainly a member of a similar organisation formed in August 1941, the Society for Closer Relations with Russia. Other MPs who were members included friends of Carr, such as Harry Atmore, and William Barnard, who had resigned from the Labour Party in sympathy with Lee in 1940. Carr was one of the vice presidents on the national executive of the S.C.R.R.<sup>153</sup> While a member of the S.C.R.R., Carr was the occasional thorn in the side of the Labour administration, particularly on issues like freedom of speech and political thought. When he referred to the importance of maintaining liberty of thought during wartime, he was making a veiled attack on the Labour Party's strict attitude towards members of the S.C.R.R. and communists.<sup>154</sup> Carr claimed that the dominance of capitalism in world economics had brought about the emergence of the huge industrial and banking cartels which were destroying competition. New Zealand, Carr urged, should "catch the spirit" of the U.S.S.R. in order to achieve "freedom from capitalism."<sup>155</sup> By the late 1940s, Labour had become vehemently opposed to any perceived communist influence within the party, and the national executive asked all MPs who were members of the S.C.R.R. to end their participation in that organisation. All such members "agreed to immediately tender their resignations."<sup>156</sup>

Carr's approach to a range of political issues was characterised by common themes of democracy and social justice. Carr's radical egalitarianism was informed by his observation of the suffering experienced by many people during the depression. He typically aligned himself with the point of view of the "common" person, as he attacked undeserved privilege in all its forms. Common

<sup>151</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. 262, 18 June 1943.

<sup>152</sup> Brown, *Rise of New Zealand Labour*, p. 176.

<sup>153</sup> Society for Closer Relations with Russia Archives, 1941, ATL 94-106-20/02, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

<sup>154</sup> N.M. Taylor, *The New Zealand People at War : The Home Front* (Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs Historical Publications Branch, 1986), p. 229.

<sup>155</sup> *N.Z.P.D.*, Vol. 264, 16 March 1944.

<sup>156</sup> Minutes of National Executive of New Zealand Labour Party, 21 August 1948.



targets for Carr's attacks were the big banks, big employers, and the stock and station agents and large run-holders that owned much of South Canterbury. In a piece written for the *New Zealand Worker* in 1928 on his first impressions of parliament, Carr wrote from the perspective of an ordinary man who could not stop thinking of the families of unemployed men on relief as he was "treading the heavy carpeted marble halls [of the parliament buildings], or reclining in luxurious chairs and lounges...." Carr showed little respect for the symbols of entrenched power: "the Clerk of the House shoulders menacingly the Mace, golden emblem of the old time club, or places it on the table, a costly barble, a glorious anachronism...."<sup>157</sup> In his first term of parliament, Carr spoke a great deal on the conditions of relief workers and the urgent need to address the growing social problem of unemployment. Carr would describe the plight of members of his electorate to illustrate his points, for example referring to a family who were so poor they could no afford clothes, so the children had to stay in a bed made of sacks to keep warm.<sup>158</sup> Based on his own experience working with constituents trying to get psychiatric patients discharged from hospitals, Carr believed that half-way houses should be established as an intermediate step between hospitals and the public. Carr also believed that many prison inmates were in fact suffering from mental illness, and that psychiatrists were needed in jails as well as hospitals.<sup>159</sup> In other speeches he pleaded the case of widows, vagrants, conscientious objectors, returned soldiers, low-ranking public servants, old age pensioners, the blind, and children with special needs.

Education was the policy area with which Carr was most deeply concerned, once saying, "If there is a Minister I do envy, it is probably the Minister of Education."<sup>160</sup> During his first term, he was a member of the parliamentary committee on education under Harry Atmore. The 1930 report of that committee proved to be instrumental in many of the reforms to the education system over the next few decades. Carr outlined his vision for the education system in the speech he gave at the presentation of the report. In this speech, he was critical of the current system for failing to recognise and foster the individual talents of each pupil, and of separating the cultural and the technical aspects of each child's education. Carr recommended that the grammar and technical schools should work together more effectively, that an intermediate school system be established to bridge the gap between primary and secondary schools, that the great number of small country

<sup>157</sup> *N.Z. Worker*, 19 December 1928.

<sup>158</sup> *N.Z.P.D.*, Vol. 221, 17 July 1929.

<sup>159</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. 266, 13 September 1944.

schools be consolidated, and that control of education be decentralised to education authorities in the districts.<sup>161</sup> Carr steadfastly opposed the compulsory teaching of religious education in state schools, as he feared it would introduce a sectarian bitterness to the school system. He believed that compulsory religious education was artificial, an “enforced piety”.<sup>162</sup>

Carr’s egalitarianism was also present in his irreverence, frankness and tolerance attitude towards “moral issues” like alcohol and gambling. Carr’s social liberalism extended to a liberal approach to marital fidelity, and he believed that tolerance of a certain amount of infidelity had the potential to help save many marriages. As a clergyman, Carr had seen many cases of infidelity resolved, the couples able to overlook their shortcomings and resolve to live happily together: “in spite of the fact that none of us believes in what I might bluntly call ‘legalized prostitution’, at the same time I contend... that anything that serves to discourage... separation or divorce proceedings is all to the good.”<sup>163</sup> Later, Carr made further reference to his beliefs about marriage and sex:

sex... whether we like it or not... is responsible for most of our mental and physical ills... a large proportion of our orthodox moral code is artificial, outdated and cruel, and a large proportion of our population suffer as a result and manifest the effect of their suffering.<sup>164</sup>

Such views would not have endeared Carr to the puritanical Fraser, and eventually he and Carr opposed each other in the house over another moral issue, the consumption of liquor in dancehalls. Carr was adamant that all things were good in moderation, and that the consumption of liquor was part of the “merriment and jollification” of the dances:

I think that many people who dance will probably be heard to say that they can dance better after they have had a couple of “spots”, and... it will make for the greater success of the dance and the effectiveness of the performance if people who so desire are enabled, as one

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<sup>160</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. 222, 27 August 1929.

<sup>161</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. 224, 17 July 1930.

<sup>162</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. 263, 5 August 1943.

<sup>163</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. 256, 15 September 1939.

<sup>164</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. 286, 18 August 1949.

of my friends described it, to get a couple of "stings" in them.... The clause is calculated to spoil a lot of innocent fun, and even in wartime people need some fun.<sup>165</sup>

Carr drew upon his experience as a radio announcer and an author to become a spokesperson for broadcasting and cultural affairs in parliament. One of Carr's chief concerns in the administration of radio was that this new medium should not fall prey to the same wealthy conservative forces which owned, operated and determined the editorial policy of the major daily newspapers.<sup>166</sup> Carr was a member of the parliamentary committee on broadcasting and reported to the Labour caucus on matters to do with broadcasting.<sup>167</sup> There was also a local dimension to Carr's interest in broadcasting, as he campaigned vigorously for a station for Timaru. Carr brought the issue up frequently in parliament, complaining that other towns of a similar size had had stations established before Timaru.<sup>168</sup> When, in 1949, Timaru's 3XC was finally opened after "twenty years of pestering", Carr considered the occasion a personal triumph: "This is a great day for Timaru and a thrilling moment for me."<sup>169</sup>

Carr opposed censorship, and would often speak out against unnecessary restrictions on what the public could or could not read, hear on the radio or see in cinemas. He accused the Coalition government of making political decisions regarding film censorship, for example by banning films from the U.S.S.R. like *The Five Year Plan*, but allowing the screening of salacious material from other parts of the world.<sup>170</sup> Carr's concerns went beyond the protection of freedom of speech, however, and on many occasions he was strongly critical of the "tedious and monotonous" content broadcast by the R.B.C.<sup>171</sup> Carr felt that radio programmers should make more concessions to popular taste, for example by featuring band music and employing announcers with more "zip", "pep" and humour.<sup>172</sup> Similarly, Carr wanted to hear swing and boogie-woogie as well as classical music: "everybody's tastes should be catered for up to the limits of decency, even to the extent of a slight admixture of vulgarity at odd moments."<sup>173</sup> In September 1944, Carr was a lone voice

<sup>165</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. 256, 28 September 1939.

<sup>166</sup> Peter Downes and Peter Harcourt, *Voices in the Air : Radio Broadcasting in New Zealand : A Documentary* (Wellington: Methuen, 1976), p. 103.

<sup>167</sup> New Zealand Labour Party Caucus Minute Books, 25 May 1940. W3752, National Archives, Wellington.

<sup>168</sup> *N.Z.P.D.*, Vol. 254, 28 July 1939.

<sup>169</sup> Sullivan, *Tuning in to Timaru*, p. 5.

<sup>170</sup> *N.Z.P.D.*, Vol. 233, 7 October 1932.

<sup>171</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. 226, 3 October 1930.

<sup>172</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. 238, 2 August 1934.

<sup>173</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. 266, 22 September 1944.

arguing that politicians should not be squeamish and hasty to ban any programming considered too vulgar for a young audience: "We don't want to take a too grandmotherly attitude over these serials and we don't want a lot of old men and women coming along and telling the kids what to read and do."<sup>174</sup> He argued for as diverse a range of content as possible, preferring "wisecracking" American programs over "stodgy and uninspiring" British content.<sup>175</sup> Carr was also concerned that as much high-quality local content as possible be programmed on the radio, and made frequent pleas for more locally produced drama and music to be broadcast on radio.<sup>176</sup>

It was the written word which was closest to Carr's heart, however. Throughout his career, Carr prided himself on being a man of letters, having spent several years at university and having experience writing and editing for a variety of publications. Carr loved to put his extensive and obscure vocabulary to use and was never short of an anecdote, biblical quotation or extract of poetry to lend an air of erudition to his speechmaking. Carr contributed articles to magazines at various times, but the creative outlet he valued most highly was poetry. Clyde's son Rae believed his father was "at bottom a poet", and that he was "never happier than when writing poetry."<sup>177</sup> In the 1930s, Carr contributed his low-brow and humorous poems to the Australian magazine *Aussie*. He also wrote dance band lyrics for bands in Christchurch like the Billy Marsden Band.<sup>178</sup> In 1944, a collection of Carr's work was published as *Poems* by the Progressive Publishing Society.<sup>179</sup> Critic Patrick Evans described Carr's work as belonging to "the J.R. Hervey tradition of tremulous clerical lyricism."<sup>180</sup> Carr also published *Politicalities*, a collection of short sketches of parliamentarians written in a colourful, conversational style.<sup>181</sup>

### Carr's Family Life

After the election win in 1928, Carr and his family settled in Timaru at 31 Selwyn Street, just north of the town centre. While much of the evidence about Carr's family life is anecdotal, consistent themes emerge of a close-knit family whose behaviour was considered unconventional and even eccentric by many Timaruvians. Laurie, a former teacher, schooled the children at home.

<sup>174</sup> *Dominion*, 14 September 1944.

<sup>175</sup> *ibid.*, 23 September 1944.

<sup>176</sup> *N.Z.P.D.*, Vol. 283, 22 September 1948.

<sup>177</sup> Rae Carr to Stephen Kerr, 15 April 2001.

<sup>178</sup> Rae Carr to Colin Brown, 26 February 1996.

<sup>179</sup> Carr, *Poems*.

<sup>180</sup> Patrick Evans, *The Penguin History of New Zealand Literature* (Auckland: Penguin, 1990), p. 91.

<sup>181</sup> Carr, *Politicalities*.

Daughter Diane was considered a tomboy and son Rae was a musician, which was not considered by one friend to be a very "manly" interest.<sup>182</sup> Laurie herself claimed to have been an atheist since birth, a fact that she kept from Clyde until they were married. She was a reader of Rationalist literature and would, according to Rae, "descend on peripatetic bible punchers with glee, with exquisite sweetness and disarming innocence tearing their arguments to bits." It was as a result of Laurie's influence that Clyde eventually became a cheerful agnostic, and "would use his extensive biblical knowledge to take the opposite side from whoever argued with him, for or against religion."<sup>183</sup> Laurie made home brewed stout, parsnip wine, and potheen, and home brew would be a part of the music evenings the family held at house.<sup>184</sup>

The Carr's home life seems to have been an enigma to many of their neighbours. Many people remember the house itself as an eccentric, disorderly place - there were no doors in the house and it was so untidy at times that a plumber who visited the house to do a job described it as the "nearest thing I have seen to a pigsty."<sup>185</sup> Doug Shears, who delivered groceries to the Carr's as a boy, remembered delivering groceries to the house, which was very messy: "One strange thing [Carr] did was to open a pound of butter and slap it on a 6 inch nail which was situated under the budgie cage. The old butter papers were never removed and were covered with bird droppings, seeds and feathers etc from the cage when the bird started flapping its wings." Carr liked to cook, and would often cook a stew in a large pot, cook it all day then leave it on the stove to be reheated again and again through the week.<sup>186</sup>

If many Timaruvians found the Carr household out of the ordinary, the Carrs found the town itself to be unfriendly place. According to Rae, they had few friends there and few people turned up to the parties they arranged. Laurie in particular "always loathed the place".<sup>187</sup> Laurie did not enjoy "hobnobbing" as the wife of a politician, so she simply did not attend campaign meetings or public functions. One of the very few occasions that Laurie appeared at a formal function with Clyde was Queen Elizabeth II's visit to Timaru in January 1954.<sup>188</sup>

Understandably, Clyde made more of an effort to assimilate himself, and Saturday night dances were a favourite pastime of his. Carr was a regular at dance halls in both Timaru and Christchurch,

<sup>182</sup> Jack Lyttle to Stephen Kerr, 20 January 2001.

<sup>183</sup> Rae Carr to Colin Brown, 26 February 1996.

<sup>184</sup> Bill Tozer to Stephen Kerr, 2 February 2001; Audrey to Stephen Kerr, 17 May 2001.

<sup>185</sup> Anonymous to Colin Brown, 1 March 1996.

<sup>186</sup> Doug Shears to Stephen Kerr, 31 March 2001.

a tall, gangly and rather clumsy figure who earned the nickname "Slide Far".<sup>187</sup> Oliver Gavigan, a local Labour Party organiser, remembered that Carr's favourite recreation was dancing all night: "He never missed a dance at the Scottish Hall... he'd come there with dancing pumps and get changed." Carr was still attending dances in the late 1940s as he approached 60 years of age.<sup>190</sup>

Carr's enjoyment of Saturday night dances, his tolerance of gambling and fondness for alcohol and tobacco distinguished him from many of his opponents, and conservative forces within the electorate. While his home life and personal interests outraged some of his political opponents (both outside and within the Labour Party), they suggest a politician at ease among the majority of his electors.

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<sup>187</sup> Rae Carr to Colin Brown, 26 February 1996.

<sup>188</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 26 January 1954.

<sup>189</sup> Doug Shears to Stephen Kerr, 31 March 2001; Bill Tozer to Stephen Kerr, 2 February 2001; and many others.

<sup>190</sup> Oliver Gavigan to Robert Paton, 15 March 1992, Trade Union Oral History Project, OH Int 0056/19, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

## 5. “Good old Clyde”: The long incumbency, 1939 to 1962.

“I intend never to retire.”

- Clyde Carr<sup>1</sup>

### The Lee Affair

The period 1937 to 1940 saw Carr as close as he ever came to the centre of the political life of the country, through his involvement with dissident Labour MP John A. Lee. By the late 1930s, Social Credit had become a divisive force within the Labour Party. The party leadership, particularly Fraser and Nash, insisted on following orthodox economic policy and rejected Social Credit, claiming it was founded in unsound economic principles. By contrast, members of the “rebel caucus” – a dissenting minority group within caucus led by Lee – were strong proponents of Social Credit. Carr was a core member of the rebel caucus. He and Lee shared a common approach to politics, a love of controversy, and an interest in monetary reform and literature. Lee was everything Carr aspired to be: an electrifying speaker, a highly successful author of fiction, an iconoclast and a controversial public figure whose radical views commanded the attention of politicians across the political spectrum. When, in the late 1930s, Lee attracted around himself a loose-knit but numerically powerful group within caucus, it was only natural that Carr became involved.

Carr attended the formal meetings of Lee’s group from their initiation in September 1937.<sup>2</sup> Initially, Lee’s focus was on organising opposition to what he saw as Labour’s increasingly conservative approach to economic policy. Clifton estimates that over half the Labour caucus leading up to the 1935 election was in favour of monetary reform, and many supporters of Social

<sup>1</sup> *N.Z.P.D.*, Vol. 286, 18 August 1949.

<sup>2</sup> Other MPs involved with Lee’s “rebel caucus include”: William Anderton, James Barclay, William Barnard, David Barnes, Charles Chapman, Harry Combs, Joseph Cotterill, William Denham, Fred Frost, Horace Herring, Edwin Howard, Gordon Hultquist, Frank Langstone, Leonard Lowry, Jack Lyon, Robert McKeen, David McMillan, James Munro, Peter Neilson, Arnold Nordmeyer, James O’Brien, Arthur Osborne, Arthur Richards, Frederick Schramm, Clarence Skinner, Catherine Stewart, Charles Williams and Ormond Wilson. This list has been compiled from Gustafson, *From the Cradle to the Grave*, p. 200; Erik Olssen, *John A. Lee* (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 1977), p. 115.

Credit were also members of the rebel caucus.<sup>3</sup> Aside from monetary reform, the other force that was instrumental in binding the group together was resentment at having been passed over for cabinet positions by Savage. The rebel caucus became increasingly critical of the party leadership after Lee was passed over for cabinet after Labour's 1938 victory. After that election, when for a second time Lee was passed over for a position in Savage's cabinet, Carr and Lee moved in caucus that the caucus, not the party leader, should elect cabinet.<sup>4</sup> The issue was brought up a few months later at the Easter Conference in 1939, when a compromise proposal was passed, whereby cabinet appointments were to be made by the party leader but had to be endorsed by caucus. This was not satisfactory to Lee, and his single-minded determination to oust Savage from the party leadership dates from this point.

In caucus meetings, Carr defended Lee against Peter Fraser's attempts to control him, and in September 1939, Carr and Arnold Nordmeyer tried to move a motion of no confidence in Fraser as deputy-leader in caucus, a motion which was lost by thirty-nine votes to three.<sup>5</sup> The relationship between Lee and Prime Minister Savage deteriorated rapidly, until Lee resorted to publishing thinly veiled attacks on Savage, most famously the article "Psychopathology in Politics" published in the left-wing journal, *Tomorrow*, in December 1939. At the time of its publication, Savage was dying of cancer, and his health problems and the demands of wartime administration made it difficult to deal with Lee's attacks. Savage and Lee's feud reached a climax at the Easter Conference of 1940, when, under very dramatic circumstances, Savage issued a deathbed condemnation of Lee, the conference voted to expel Lee, and then Savage died, all within a twenty-four hour period.<sup>6</sup>

Immediately after Savage's death, Lee believed rather optimistically that he had the firm support of thirteen members of his rebel caucus. In the end, only one MP, William Barnard, followed Lee out of the party. Lee's retrospective response to the desertion of his allies was typically egocentric: "my expulsion dispersed the rebel element. I was the force that held them together.... There was no sustained pressure after the spearpoint had been expelled."<sup>7</sup> In fact, it seems that most of the rebel caucus, rather than being left disillusioned and directionless without their "spearpoint", made

<sup>3</sup> R. Clifton, "Douglas Credit and the Labour Party, 1930-1935" (Master of Arts, Victoria University of Wellington, 1961), p. 219.

<sup>4</sup> Gustafson, *From the Cradle to the Grave*, p. 232.

<sup>5</sup> New Zealand Labour Party Caucus Minute Books, 10 September 1939.

<sup>6</sup> Gustafson, *From the Cradle to the Grave*, pp. 268-269.



quite pragmatic decisions about their electoral futures. Rather than continuing to align themselves with Lee after his provocative behaviour and dramatic expulsion, the great majority of Lee's supporters chose the safe option of staying with the Labour Party. Like many of the rebel MPs, Carr felt that with the publication of "Psychopathology", Lee had gone too far, and this was the point at which he abandoned his support for Lee.

In an interview published in the *Timaru Herald* immediately after Lee's expulsion and Barnard's resignation from the party, Carr was critical of the Labour Party leadership's handling of the affair. Carr said that he considered Barnard a close friend and he had the "very highest regard not only for [his] lofty ideals and unimpeachable character, but for his well-balanced judgement and judicial mind." It was clear that Carr was largely agreed with Barnard's view that the Labour Party "no longer followed the ideals that had led him to join them" and that the method of Lee's expulsion at conference had been irregular. At the end of the interview, however, Carr was careful to explicitly (if somewhat grudgingly) state his support for Fraser as the new party leader, saying that he was "prepared to give Mr Fraser every opportunity of proving himself..."<sup>8</sup>

Carr's frustration with Fraser must have been a major factor in his decision in April 1940 to stand for the party leadership following Savage's death. The final vote went Fraser thirty-three, David McMillan twelve, and Carr three.<sup>9</sup> It is difficult to understand the reasons behind Carr's nomination, or what he hoped to achieve by challenging Fraser's authority in this way, as Carr had no chance of winning the vote. One explanation that has been advanced is that Carr stood because he saw himself as senior to McMillan and thus more deserving of the leadership.<sup>10</sup> Elsewhere, it has been suggested that Carr was "put up" for the leadership to ensure a genuinely plural vote.<sup>11</sup> This suggestion is interesting, and may have been a tactic on the part of Fraser to split the dissident vote within caucus. Whether Carr's leadership nomination reflected a genuine division within the rebel caucus, or a shrewd divide-and-conquer tactic on the part of Fraser, there was never any question of Carr's success. This makes Carr's decision to stand against Fraser appear to be a strangely suicidal political manoeuvre. With no chance of success, it seems that all Carr stood to gain by standing was to alienate Fraser and the party orthodoxy.

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<sup>7</sup> John A. Lee, *The John A. Lee Diaries 1936-40* (Christchurch: Whitcoulls, 1981), p. 210.

<sup>8</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 19 March 1940.

<sup>9</sup> Carr was nominated by Barnard, suggesting that he had the support of the more staunch supporters of Lee within caucus. New Zealand Labour Party Caucus Minute Books, 4 April 1940.

At the Timaru Labour Party branch meeting following Lee's expulsion, the thirty-one members present had a protracted discussion of the conference. The official report of the Annual Conference was read, and Carr and others claimed that aspects of the report were "contrary to fact". There is no more detail of this discussion, however, and at the conclusion of the meeting, the branch swore its "unswerving loyalty" to Fraser and the government.<sup>12</sup> The political fallout from Carr's involvement with Lee had created sufficient disunity within the local party that in 1941 a rival Labour candidate for Timaru, David Barnes, was nominated. In an effort to minimise the potential damage such an ongoing dispute could cause in the electorate, the national executive sent party president James Roberts and party secretary Michael Moohan to Timaru to investigate the dispute. In a three hour meeting, twenty-six local party members met with Carr, Moohan and Roberts to discuss Carr's involvement with Lee and the effect of that involvement on Labour's electoral chances in Timaru. Some party members took issue with Carr having been "associated very closely with John A. Lee and expressed the opinion that they did not think [Carr] could be trusted...."<sup>13</sup> Two statements in particular by Carr had attracted the ire of party members: "attention was drawn to the statement made by Mr Carr in 1938 that he was 'prepared to follow Jack Lee to Hell', and also that at a later date that he had stated that he was 'awaiting some very important funerals.'" In his own defence, Carr pointed out that at the first statement was made at a time when Lee was "fighting for the Party's banner", and, regarding the second, Carr disputed exactly what had been said and also "the general atmosphere in which the statement had been made." Importantly, no one at the meeting had any criticisms to make of Carr regarding his constituency work and other duties as MP. According to the report, "the stand taken by delegates... against Mr Carr was in the interests of the Party unity, and the fact that they thought Mr Carr, through his association with Lee had lost so much support it was doubtful if he could hold the seat." Carr denied that this was true, and stressed that he had had nothing to do with Lee since his expulsion. After further consideration, it was resolved that Carr should be endorsed as the party's candidate for the forthcoming election.

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<sup>10</sup> Michael Bassett and Michael King, *Tomorrow Comes the Song: A Life of Peter Fraser* (Auckland: Penguin, 2000), p. 184.

<sup>11</sup> Martyn Finlay to Colin Brown, 17 February 1996.

<sup>12</sup> Michael Bassett's notes from Timaru Labour Party Branch Minute Books, 27 April 1940.

<sup>13</sup> Minutes of National Executive of New Zealand Labour Party, 2 August 1941.

The Lee affair took a heavy toll on the local party. Membership of Labour Party branches within Timaru dropped from 781 in 1940, to 467 in 1941, to 272 in 1944. While this drop in participation reflected the effect of World War Two as well as dissatisfaction within the party over the Lee affair, it nevertheless represented a serious blow to the party organisation. Interestingly, the effect on membership of affiliated unions was much less dramatic. Affiliated union membership within the Timaru L.R.C. fell from 2935 in 1940 to 2699 in 1943, and by 1944 had already begun to rise again.<sup>14</sup> In his article on the impact of Lee's expulsion on the Labour Party, Erik Olssen also noted the relatively small drop in affiliated union membership, and argued that the effect of the affair and the threat of a split in the Labour movement was that most unions were brought "into line behind Labour."<sup>15</sup>

John A. Lee himself was bitter about Carr's refusal to resign from the Labour Party:

Clyde has abundant intelligence and literary appreciation but he finally degenerated into an MP determined to hold his seat and adjust his position accordingly. He feared my fate and surrendered. That was the end of him. Once a person swallows all that in which he believes he becomes just so much meat on the hoof.<sup>16</sup>

Lee's analysis seems somewhat unfair and self-serving. Carr's support for Lee was initially based on a political and personal meeting of minds. Along with a group of (overwhelmingly backbench) MPs, Carr lent his support to Lee in the hope of influencing the party's political direction. When Carr judged that Lee's vendetta with Savage had become personal and unreasonable, he withdrew his support, though not before having put his own political career at risk. In so doing, Carr almost certainly saved his political skin. Timaru election results in 1943 and 1946 demonstrated that Carr could not have afforded to lose any more support and still have retained the seat.

### 1943 Election

By 1943, the honeymoon period of the first Labour government was over. After two terms of unprecedented popular support, in the early 1940s the administration struggled through a

<sup>14</sup> *N.Z.L.P. Annual Conference Reports*, 1940-1944.

<sup>15</sup> Erik Olssen, "The Impact of John A Lee's Expulsion Upon the Labour Party," *New Zealand Journal of History* 12, no. 1 (1978), p. 38.

<sup>16</sup> J.A. Lee Manuscript, John A. Lee Papers, F11, Series 23, NZMS 828, Auckland Public Library, Auckland.

succession of difficult issues: the onset of the Second World War, the Lee affair and the death of Savage. After his expulsion from the Labour Party three years earlier, Lee led a party of his own, the Democratic Soldiers' Labour Party, to the polls in 1943. While the D.S.L.P. lacked a consistent and clear policy, it benefitted from the personal charisma, high profile and determination of its leader. The D.S.L.P. posed a particular threat to Carr in Timaru, given his close association with and subsequent renunciation of Lee. On election day, the D.S.L.P. won a higher share of the vote in Timaru than in any other provincial town seat. Carr's 1943 campaign was a lively one, with many heated meetings and debates on a wide range of issues. Carr was required to defend his own record as a constituency MP and was publicly called to account over his association with Lee.

The D.S.L.P. candidate for Timaru was Douglas Cresswell. Cresswell was a passionate and talented public speaker, though his personal politics were an odd mixture. A self-described conservative representing a radical party, Cresswell claimed that before joining the D.S.L.P., he had always been a National voter.<sup>17</sup> Cresswell was an early and relatively senior member of the D.S.L.P.: he had been considered by Lee to contest the Christchurch East by-election in 1942, and by 1944 he had risen to the rank of South Island organiser, responsible for negotiations with the Labour Party.<sup>18</sup> Cresswell came to Timaru to contest Carr's seat, although it is not clear where he lived before the election.<sup>19</sup>

Jack Satterthwaite, the National candidate for Timaru in 1943, had strong credentials as a local man. He worked for the council, and his work was frequently acknowledged by the chairs of his campaign meetings.<sup>20</sup> His father, T.W. Satterthwaite, had been mayor of Timaru. Satterthwaite tended to support socially conservative causes such as the teaching of religion in schools, and made frequent reference during the campaign to the importance of family values.<sup>21</sup>

At the opening meeting of his campaign, Carr set a tone of radical egalitarianism, saying that it would not worry him "if there were no rich people left in New Zealand."<sup>22</sup> In his speeches, Carr set up an opposition between Labour as the party of the common people and National as the party of high incomes and high status occupations. Labour leaders, Carr argued, were different from the National Party hierarchy because they had personally felt the pinch of the depression. Labour's

<sup>17</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 18 September 1943.

<sup>18</sup> Olssen, *Lee*, pp. 179, 197.

<sup>19</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 22 September 1943.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, 21 and 18 September 1943.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, 16 September 1943.

generous and successful social security policy was the product of this experience.<sup>23</sup> Typically, Carr emphasised the importance of industrial growth if New Zealand was to progress beyond its status as a “glorified market garden or cowyard.”<sup>24</sup> Later, Carr widened the focus of his message to include farmers and rural communities, speaking on the economic interdependence of rural and urban communities.<sup>25</sup>

A major issue at the 1943 election was Labour’s management of the war effort. There was widespread criticism of the heavy regulations and shortages experienced during the war. The focus of many of these criticisms was the Internal Marketing Division, the government organisation responsible for coordinating the production, distribution and pricing of essential household goods. At a special meeting for women at the Little Playhouse, Carr was called upon to justify the activities of the I.M.D. to an extremely hostile audience, some of whom pointedly left the meeting before the vote of thanks had been made. The audience were particularly incensed over high household food prices, a concern widely considered the domain of women in this period.<sup>26</sup> At Kensington, Carr had a bizarre run-in with an eccentric audience member who was outraged with the high tobacco and beer shortages.<sup>27</sup> The man constantly interjected in Carr’s speech with questions bearing little or no relation to Carr’s comments. The situation gave rise to some comic *non sequiturs*, and gave Carr the opportunity to display his dry wit and ability to handle difficult audiences:

The interjector... called out, “no tobacco, no tobacco.”

Mr Carr: I am as heavy a smoker as anyone but I call it a small sacrifice indeed to curtail my smoking to the minimum during the present time of sacrifice.

The interjector: Hooey!

Mr Carr: It is not hooey. When life and death are at stake, to introduce side issues is to trifle with reality. Maybe your shoes pinch you, but this is no time to air a personal grudge.

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<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, 1 September 1943.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, 4 September 1943.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, 9 September 1943.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, 16 September 1943.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*, 17 September 1943.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, 11 September 1943.

When the interjector came again, another member of the audience rose and said: "I move that the speaker be allowed to continue. We did not come here to listen to an interjector - we want to hear the candidate."

..."You remind me of one of those boiling mud pools at Rotorua," Mr Carr told the interjector when he came again, and the interjector replied, "Yes I am a mud pool at Rotorua all right."

After a few minutes the voice of the interjector was heard again.

...When Mr Carr asked what was more important, tobacco or food, medicine or beer, the interjector shouted: "The beer's been cut down!"

Mr Carr: That is what I am telling you.

Much to the visible discomfort of the audience, the interjector persisted at intervals, but he was ignored by the speaker. When Mr Carr mentioned coal the interjector said; "you cannot get it," the candidate replying, "you may not have any coal my friend but you have plenty of gas."<sup>28</sup>

In general, Carr's response to the public's complaints about high prices and shortages was to stress the need for sacrifice during wartime. In response to criticism of Labour's deployment of New Zealand armed forces, Carr often quoted Winston Churchill's statement that New Zealand had not put a foot wrong during the war, and pointed out that neither Lee nor Holland had opposed Labour's decisions on deployment when the issue was debated in Parliament.<sup>29</sup>

Carr also had to respond to pointed questions about his past involvement with Lee. Initially, Carr's response to the electoral threat posed by Cresswell was to issue generalised warnings to Labour voters about the dangers of vote splitting, and to make fairly mild criticisms of the D.S.L.P. At Watlington, Carr claimed to find three things wrong with the Democratic Labour Party, that "it was not democratic, it did not represent labour, and it was not a party."<sup>30</sup> Later in the campaign, Carr expanded upon his reasons for disassociating himself with the rebel caucus, describing Lee as a "wrecker" who was "actuated by vindictiveness and a deep and growing

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<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, 24 September 1943.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, 11 September 1943.

grudge" in forming the D.S.L.P. to fight Labour.<sup>31</sup> At his final address at Theatre Royal, Carr's speech was constantly interrupted by interjections from O.J. McKee, a former Labour Party member who had stood for the D.S.L.P. against Mabel Howard in the Christchurch East by-election earlier in the year. In a heated exchange which raised calls from the crowd for his ejection, McKee accused Carr of abandoning Lee:

"You said you would follow John A Lee to hell, but you did not do it!" cried Mr McKee amid boos and cheers.

Mr Carr: I said that I would follow Mr Lee to the hot place, but I never said I would go with him when he was attacking another man (the late Rt. Hon M.J. Savage) who was on his way to heaven. ...when Lee was told that all he was out to do was destroy the Labour Party which he had helped to create he just sat and grinned.<sup>32</sup>

Carr claimed that it was with the publication of Lee's article "Psychopathology in Politics" that he finally withdrew his support for Lee. When McKee continued to disrupt the meeting by attacking the speaker, Carr accused him of being a wrecker: "John A. Lee is a wrecker and you are a wrecker... If you and Lee were in a boat together one of you would throw away the oars and the other would pull out the plug in the bung hole."

Despite his defensiveness over his relationship with Lee, Carr's campaign was more positive than those of either of his opponents, and he expressed optimism and enthusiasm about the current administration. Carr spoke of his pride in being a New Zealander, the strength of character of young New Zealanders, and the need for the country to increase its population, saying "There's only one problem with New Zealanders, there aren't enough of them."<sup>33</sup> Carr still worked very hard during his campaigns, attending up to three meetings per day and once more holding more meetings over a longer period than either of his opponents. Carr held twenty-five meetings on twenty-two days as opposed to Satterthwaite's twenty meetings on seventeen days and Cresswell's twenty-one meetings on fourteen days. Carr's superior level of organisation reflected the degree of

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<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*, 9 September 1943.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*, 25 September 1943.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, 18 September 1943.

funding, experience, unity and enthusiasm within Labour Party in Timaru. With each successive election Carr fought, it became easier to coordinate the logistics of his schedule of meetings.

Satterthwaite began his campaign two days after Carr with a meeting at the Theatre Royal. At this meeting, the essential problem of the National Party at the 1943 election manifested itself: they had nothing radically different from Labour to offer voters. Satterthwaite simply promised the continuation of Labour's social security scheme, increased production to boost the war effort, and tax relief for families.<sup>34</sup> Deciding that it might be more fruitful to focus his efforts on attacking Labour rather than trying to convince his audiences that National had new and innovative policies to offer, Satterthwaite based his criticisms of Labour around three themes. The first of these was over-regulation by the Labour government; the second was the poor deployment of New Zealand's war time resources, especially man- and woman-power; and the last was the domination of the Labour caucus by outside interests, specifically the large trade unions. The I.M.D. came in for particular attention throughout the campaign, especially because of its effect on farmers. According to Satterthwaite, the result of central control of primary production was that "the man on the land is not a free man today".<sup>35</sup> The I.M.D. was criticised for increasing the prices of goods but not their quality, and Satterthwaite promised that National would abolish it. Satterthwaite argued that Labour had made poor decisions on the deployment of the country's resources and that its excessive spending during wartime had lead to mounting national debt. He highlighted the desperate need for more men and women to work in essential industries.<sup>36</sup>

In keeping with a major aspect of his party's campaigning, Satterthwaite accused Labour of being the puppets of the large trade unions. He adopted the rhetorical device of referring to the strong trade unions as "gangsters", saying at Kensington that "we laughed at gangster control when it was Al Capone in Chicago... but we never dreamed that we would have it here in New Zealand."<sup>37</sup> The party also pushed this theme in its display advertisements in the *Timaru Herald*. Campaign advertising was becoming more sophisticated graphically, moving beyond simple archetypal portraits of target audience members (the farmer, the young couple, the retired couple, the worker and so on) of previous campaigns, to include more sophisticated visual elements like political cartoons. One famous National Party advertisement showed the hands of union leaders like Walsh

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<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*, 3 September 1943.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*, 7 September 1943.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, 16 September 1943.



and Roberts pushing Labour cabinet ministers around a chessboard. The headline ran, "The National Party will abolish outside domination of Parliament."<sup>38</sup>

The D.S.L.P.'s main planks for the 1943 election were outlined in the *Timaru Herald* at the beginning of the campaign, and directly reflected the personal concerns of Lee. The party promised the socialisation of banking, the reduction of overseas military commitments, a more generous soldier rehabilitation scheme, increased pensions and endowments, and an overhaul of the civil service pay scheme. However, it is likely that Cresswell received little in the way of prescriptive policy guidelines to follow. According to Erik Olssen, D.S.L.P. candidates at the 1943 election "received from head-office only a four-page policy statement and best wishes."<sup>39</sup> Cresswell's own policy statements were an idiosyncratic mix. He advocated a range of policies, many of which were common to the political platforms of other parties; for example the abolition of the internal marketing division, improved wages to civil servants, support for a central state bank and industrial unionism, and reduction of overseas debt. During the course of his campaign Cresswell echoed the both National Party (in his frequent reference to the big unions' "gangster control" of the government) and Labour (in his advocacy of progressive social policy such as introducing a generous motherhood endowment). In a single speech he claimed to stand one hundred per cent for private enterprise, and demand the socialisation of the banks.<sup>40</sup>

While his policy advocacy was somewhat muddled, Cresswell was a savvy campaigner and tailored his speeches to specific audiences. At Pareora, a strongly Labour-voting community of freezing workers, Cresswell encouraged skepticism about the success of Labour's policies in bringing about a fair distribution of consumer goods, claiming there were very few washing machines and telephones at Pareora in comparison with wealthy areas of Timaru such as Waititi Road.<sup>41</sup> At rural Kingsdown, on the other hand, Cresswell explained the D.S.L.P.'s plans to create farmers' co-operatives through state-owned stock and station agents, thus improving financial conditions for farmers.<sup>42</sup> Cresswell was dismissive of both the major parties, referring to them collectively as the "two-headed Goliath."<sup>43</sup> In the end, however, Labour was more often the target of Cresswell's attacks than National. This reflected both his earlier support for National and the

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<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*, 15 September 1943.

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Olssen, *Lee*, p. 187.

<sup>40</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 21 September 1943.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*, 17 September 1943.

lingering resentment felt by many members of the D.S.L.P. towards Labour, which Cresswell described as the "party of the Judas Kiss."<sup>44</sup> At the first meeting of his campaign, Cresswell referred to Carr's involvement with Lee, unintentionally damning Lee and himself in the process: "I won't say that I will follow Jack Lee to hell then not do it, I will follow him to hell!"<sup>45</sup>

The effectiveness of Cresswell's campaign was severely restricted by the financial limitations of his party organisation. Without the same ability as Labour and National to raise funds through a network of branches and affiliated unions and businesses, Cresswell resorted to asking for donations at his meetings in order to fund the campaign. The fact that Cresswell started his campaign a full week after Carr and Satterthwaite had begun theirs was another symptom of the organisational weakness of the D.S.L.P.

Election day saw Cresswell win 1504 votes, or twelve percent of the total vote in Timaru. While he took votes from both Labour and National, Labour was hit the hardest, its share of the vote dropping by slightly over eight percentage points between 1938 and 1943. Carr's majority was reduced by 4.2 percentage points, from 17.7 percent in 1938 to 13.5 percent in 1943. By ending his involvement with Lee upon the publication of "Psychopathology in Politics", then diplomatically silencing his criticisms of the Labour hierarchy of Fraser and Nash, Carr proved himself to be an expedient judge of public opinion. Had he resigned from the Labour Party in sympathy with Lee in 1940, Carr would have had little hope of holding the seat in 1943. Instead, although his majority was reduced, the seat remained safe.

It is difficult to describe precisely the effect of Carr's public association with Lee on his electoral success in Timaru. There are many ways to read Cresswell's relatively high vote. Based on the magnitude of the fall in support for the major parties at the 1943 election, the D.S.L.P. vote appears to have been made up of a combination of former Labour voters who had previously supported Carr but who were now protesting his desertion of Lee, and swinging National voters. Two thirds of Cresswell's vote may be accounted for by the reduction in Carr's vote, suggesting that even three years after his expulsion, there was still a measure of support for Lee in the electorate. However, the drop in the National vote in 1943 was equivalent to one third of the D.S.L.P. vote, which suggests that perhaps not all the party's support was taken from Labour. It is

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<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*, 18 September 1943.

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*, 24 September 1943.

<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*, 18 September 1943.

impossible to guess, however, what proportion of Labour voters had disapproved of Carr's support for Lee but continued to vote for Labour, or what proportion, like Carr, supported Lee up to a point but who had "returned to the fold" by 1943. Judged on the relatively small drop in support for Labour in 1943, it seems the majority of Labour voters in Timaru tolerated or approved of Carr's involvement with Lee. Two factors reduced the risk the D.S.L.P. posed for Carr. Firstly, his large existing majority provided a "buffer" against any loss of support. Secondly, a substantial minority of the D.S.L.P. vote appears to have come from National rather than Labour. Had Cresswell's share of the vote come entirely from Labour voters, the situation would have been far worse for Carr.

Significantly, the Labour vote in Timaru did not return to its 1938 level at the next election, when there was no third party. In 1946, the National vote rose by a greater proportion of the vote than the D.S.L.P. had won in 1943, while the increase in the Labour vote was very small. In other words, between 1938 and 1946, whether through his involvement with Lee, or as a result of the broader swing away from Labour, or some combination of both factors, Carr lost a substantial proportion of his support in Timaru to National. Carr's involvement with Lee had a negative, though not catastrophic, effect on his electoral fortunes. His majority remained relatively slim in 1946, 1949 and 1951. It was not until 1954, when Social Credit won a significant number of votes at the expense of National, that Timaru looked truly safe for Carr again.

### 1946 Election

The 1946 campaign in Timaru was a fairly uneventful two-way race. The National candidate was Jack Acland, sitting member for the neighbouring and predominantly rural electorate of Temuka, which had been absorbed into the Ashburton electorate in the recent electoral redistribution. Somewhat unusually, there was no animosity between the candidates. In fact, during the campaign Carr said he considered Acland a personal friend.<sup>46</sup> Their friendship was based not only on their professional relationship as fellow South Canterbury MPs, but also on their very similar personal politics. Acland had a reputation for being liberal and independent-minded National MP, and on occasion had voted against his party in parliament.<sup>47</sup> Acland was a strong advocate for the social security scheme, and pledged never to reduce wages, social security benefits or the family

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<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*, 7 September 1943.

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*, 5 November 1946.

allowance. Acland staunchly defended his membership of the National Party on the grounds that it allowed him the freedom to stand up for the causes he believed in, saying "I am a Liberal and in the National Party there is a place for the Liberal, who has freedom to vote according to his principles."<sup>48</sup>

Many of Acland's policy statements were similar to Carr's. He emphasised the need for Timaru to reverse the flow of population to the North Island by developing its port and attracting more industry to create opportunities for its young people.<sup>49</sup> Despite his personal liberalism, Acland still bore the brunt of the public perception that National policies were overly generous to farmers. At Cullmantown, his speech was interrupted by interjectors, mostly farm labourers, who accused National of proposing to "spoon feed" farmers. At Kensington, audience members accused National of simply being the Reform Party under a different name, "like a criminal who changes their name in order to evade the police." When National Party leader Sydney Holland spoke at the Theatre Royal to an audience of a thousand, he did little to change people's perceptions of National as the party of the farmer, arguing that "it is sheer madness to talk of establishing new industries when we have not the labour, electric power or fuel for our existing industries." Instead, he said, government support would go to primary producers.<sup>50</sup>

Dominating Carr's campaign was the controversy over the Timaru Park land transfer. In 1944, Carr had opposed the transfer of one and a half acres of Timaru Park to the South Canterbury Hospital Board for the purposes of constructing an addition to the hospital. The Hospital Board accused Carr of presenting their case to the Parliamentary Lands Committee unfavourably, and attempting to slow or halt the transfer at every given opportunity. Eventually, the Board asked Acland to make representations to the Land Committee on their behalf rather than Carr. Claiming to have the support of the majority of Timaruvians, the Board presented a petition to parliament on the issue in December 1944.<sup>51</sup> Then, during the 1946 election campaign, a group calling itself the Timaru Citizens' Committee publicly passed a motion of no-confidence in Carr to Prime Minister Fraser over Carr's handling of the Timaru Park transfer. The chair of the Timaru Citizens' Committee, Mr F. Hilton, attacked Carr, saying, "in this town it has been demonstrated that we

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<sup>47</sup> *Press*, 6 November 1946.

<sup>48</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 26 November 1946.

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*, 29 October 1946.

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*, 6 November 1946.

<sup>51</sup> *N.Z.P.D.*, Vol. 267, 7 December 1944.

have not a representative of the people but a dictator who arbitrarily subordinates the wishes of the people to his own will.”<sup>52</sup>

Despite the unfavourable publicity it brought him, it seems as though Carr’s judgement of the controversy was very astute. While there was considerable protest directed at him for his opposition to the transfer, many letters to the editor expressed support for Carr’s point of view. These letters pointed out that the hospital already had land at its disposal, and that on no less than four occasions, parliamentary committees had declined to allow the hospital use of the land. The idea that the Hospital Board and the Citizens’ Committee were trying to gain political mileage out of the controversy was frequently expressed in letters to the editor.<sup>53</sup>

Otherwise, during the campaign, Carr followed his personal policy interests, speaking on issues such as international relations and education, and the success of the Labour government in its last eleven years in power. Carr expressed progressive views on education during the campaign, arguing that children should have more freedom at school to study those subjects which interested them the most, and referring to people who preferred private over public schools as “snobbish”.<sup>54</sup> Carr also emphasised the importance of economic planning for New Zealand: “The future of this country is either a planned and prosperous New Zealand or a chaotic free-for-all existence like that in the United States today.”<sup>55</sup>

Carr’s discussion of the achievements of Labour government focused on housing, which was an especially important issue in Timaru in the post-war period.<sup>56</sup> Carr responded to complaints about goods shortages by arguing that they were the result of years of war, not Labour’s economic administration.<sup>57</sup> In a typically colourful way, Carr offered proof of Labour’s success in controlling prices during the war by holding up a newspaper advertisement from 1937 advertising “Scanties: one bob a pair,” which made the women at the Kingsdown meeting smile. In 1937, Carr argued, National were trying to “capitalise on advertisements like that, saying prices would go though the roof, but they haven’t.... Well, a person is entitled to be a Tory is he wants to – if that is as far as his intelligence takes him.”<sup>58</sup>

<sup>52</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 31 October 1946.

<sup>53</sup> *ibid.*, 20 November 1946.

<sup>54</sup> *ibid.*, 22 November 1946.

<sup>55</sup> *ibid.*, 5 November 1946.

<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*, 29 October 1946; Wilkinson, “Post-War Growth of Timaru”, p. 18.

<sup>57</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 26 November 1946.

<sup>58</sup> *ibid.*, 14 November 1946.

In a series of "open letter" style advertisements in the last week of the campaign, Carr described the work he had done for his electorate and for his electors:

There can be few families in Timaru that have not received some service, directly or indirectly, by reason of the fact that the Member is always on the job.... A conscientious Member of Parliament is the personal link between the people and the government, both of which he represents.... For service and satisfaction, Vote Clyde Carr and Labour again and again and again.<sup>59</sup>

Carr also highlighted his success in attracting new industry to Timaru, and in reopening industries which were closed under National, for example the woollen mills and the boot factory. Carr claimed to have taken an active part in attracting industries like the Tekau Knitting Factory, the macaroni factory, and the Linen Flax Corporation to Timaru.<sup>60</sup>

A number of letters to the editor of the *Timaru Herald* praised Carr's work for the electorate. One related the story of Carr's assistance in getting the local Jockey Club the use of a train to transport people to one of its race meetings during the war. The same writer also praised Carr for his willingness to enlist during the Second World War: "He joined the forces as a private and marched and worked with his comrades in arms and in Parliament was a keen advocate for the better conditions for men in camp and soldiers generally."<sup>61</sup> Such letters illustrated a perception among the public of Carr as a "man of the people", willing to lend his support in small but practical ways, and to "muck in" and do his bit along side his fellow citizens.

Carr's victory on election day saw much cheering and singing of "for he's a jolly good fellow" for "Good old Clyde". "Although the combined musical effect was not pleasing to musical ears, there was no mistaking the sincerity and spontaneity of the effort," commented the *Timaru Herald*.<sup>62</sup> In his victory speech, Carr thanked his local party organisation, remarking that it was only because of their commitment and ability that he was able to compete and win "against an expenditure of tremendous sums of money by our opponents."<sup>63</sup> The *Timaru Herald's* editorial

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<sup>59</sup> *ibid.*, 26 November 1946.

<sup>60</sup> *ibid.*, 21 November 1946.

<sup>61</sup> *ibid.*, 26 November 1946.

<sup>62</sup> *ibid.*, 28 November 1946.

<sup>63</sup> *ibid.*

congratulated Carr on his win, "the hardest contest of his career," which, the newspaper argued was "largely on account of assiduous attention to his Parliamentary duties."<sup>64</sup>

The 1946 election saw Carr's majority dramatically reduced from its 1943 level. Twelve percent of the vote was won by the D.S.L.P. in 1943, the National vote dropping by 3.8 percentage points, and the Labour vote by 8.1 percentage points. At the 1946 election however, in a two-way race, support for the major parties did not return to their previous levels. Rather, as table 5.1 shows, Labour's share of the vote in Timaru only increased by 1.1 percentage points between 1943 and 1946, whereas the National vote leapt up by 10.8 percentage points.

Table 5.1: Effect of D.S.L.P. on major parties' share of vote in Timaru 1938-1946

Party	1938	1943	1946
Labour	58.9%	50.8% (-8.1)	51.9% (+1.1)
National	41.1%	37.3% (-3.8)	51.9% (+10.8)
D.S.L.P.		12.0%	

One interpretation of these results is that most votes for the D.S.L.P. in 1943 came from former Labour voters, the majority of whom did not swing back to Labour in 1943, but instead showed their continuing disapproval of Carr and Labour by switching their vote to National in 1946. Carr's majority plummeted to just 3.9 percent of the total vote, or 520 votes. Acland had come as close as any National candidate up until that point to beating Carr. Meanwhile, Labour's parliamentary majority was cut to just four seats, and their winning margin was less than three percent of the national vote. It was to be the last election won by Labour for over a decade.

After the 1946 election, Carr was nominated in caucus for a cabinet position, but was once again unsuccessful.<sup>65</sup> He was, however, elected as Deputy Speaker and Chairman of Committees. While Carr made no secret of the fact he hoped for a ministerial position, he made little effort to change those aspects of his personal and political behaviour which put him out of favour with his party hierarchy: chiefly, his close association with Lee and his outspoken support for the Soviet Union. There is also anecdotal evidence that Carr's private life was another factor in keeping him out of favour with the party hierarchy. Apparently, representatives from the Timaru Branch of the Labour Party once met Fraser on the platform of the Timaru Railway Station with the intention of

<sup>64</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> New Zealand Labour Party Caucus Minute Books, 13 May 1947.

advancing Carr's case for a cabinet position. Fraser "agreed with them in their estimate of Carr's abilities but asked if the committee would take responsibility for their MP's private life; they declined."<sup>66</sup> According to another story, Fraser once caught Carr *in flagrante delicto* with a woman in the caucus room late one night.<sup>67</sup>

John A. Lee recounted similar stories of Carr's behaviour. He claimed that in November 1937 the *New Zealand Truth* had a photo of Carr "kissing a girl on the Wellington Wharf and [was] trying to blackmail him into lobbying against the Judicial Reports Bill."<sup>68</sup> Elsewhere, Lee shed more light on Carr and Fraser's relationship, claiming that Carr

had been too strictly brought up and like many of his kind went very far the other way, but always insisted on being called "the Rev" by the Speaker.

Once in Bellamy's Dr McMillan said there was one sure way to discover if a woman had venereal disease. Now this was learning dear to Clyde's heart.

"Tell me," he said, "tell me."

"Well," said the Doc, "you go with her and bed down with her and if in about a week you are ill you know for sure." The laughter rocked around Bellamy's.

Fraser's disapproving face when Clyde told a dripper was one of the sights of Wellington.

Clyde knew and told his worst loudly when Fraser could not get away.<sup>69</sup>

Given his taste for salacious gossip and exaggeration, Lee's anecdotes must be taken with a grain of salt. Nevertheless, if such stories were true, it is entirely possible that the puritanical Fraser refused to promote Carr partly on the grounds of Carr's womanising. However, Carr's radicalism would have been at least as much a barrier to his advancement within the party. In its obituary editorial on Carr, the *Timaru Herald* discussed Carr's aspiration to cabinet, saying that "he was disappointed in not attaining the ministerial rank to which he aspired and to which, by comparison of his abilities with those of some of the chosen, he was entitled. Perhaps he contributed to his own

<sup>66</sup> Michael Vance to Colin Brown, 11 March 1996.

<sup>67</sup> Michael Bassett to Stephen Kerr, 13 February 2001.

<sup>68</sup> Lee, *Lee Diaries*, p. 42.

<sup>69</sup> J.A. Lee Manuscript, John A. Lee Papers, F11, Series 23, NZMS 828, Auckland Public Library, Auckland.



failure in this respect; fearless speech and independence of thought are, unfortunately, rarely regarded as attributes in political circles these days.”<sup>70</sup>

After 1946, Carr’s adversarial attitude toward the party leadership mellowed somewhat. Robert Tizard has suggested that Carr’s appointment to the role of Chairman of Committees and Deputy Speaker may have been a ploy on the part of Fraser to assure Carr’s regular attendance in parliament at a time when Labour had a majority of just four. Fraser may have judged that the small flat which came with the job would be enough of a carrot to keep Carr in Wellington at all times during the session.<sup>71</sup> If Carr’s appointment was a strategy intended to bring him back into line with the party, it was successful. Almost immediately, Carr appeared to shift towards the centre of the political spectrum. In his first speech in parliament as Chairman of Committees, Carr expressed his loyalty to the Crown (“the heart-centre of our Commonwealth”) and emphasised the Labour Party’s role in mitigating the influence of the “dangerous” radical left.<sup>72</sup>

### **The National Party in Timaru**

The National Party in Timaru was characterised by poor levels of organisation. This was both a result and a cause of Labour’s dominance in the electorate. Despite being within close reach of winning the seat for significant periods of Carr’s term, National were constantly struggling to raise funds and to motivate themselves in the face of defeat after defeat by Carr.

The key issue that the local party organisation struggled with was fund-raising. The National Party relied heavily on paid membership, donations, and subscriptions to the party periodical *Freedom* for its campaign funds. Funding shortfalls were never overcome, even during Labour’s decline in the late 1940s and early 1950s, when the potential for the party to capitalise on optimism among National voters was at its peak. In May 1947, the party estimated it needed a thousand more members, and to collect all unpaid fees by existing members, in order to gather the resources necessary to fight the next election.<sup>73</sup> In July, Timaru was the only electorate organisation to default on its payment of its levy to the National head office. In an attempt to improve the situation, the National Party divisional office in Christchurch sent a professional

<sup>70</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 19 September 1962.

<sup>71</sup> Robert Tizard to Colin Brown, 16 February 1996.

<sup>72</sup> *N.Z.P.D.*, Vol. 276, 10 July 1946.

<sup>73</sup> Timaru National Party Minute Books, 14 May 1947, MB 390/33, Macmillan Brown Library, Christchurch.

canvasser to Timaru to help raise funds.<sup>74</sup> The canvasser's efforts were unsuccessful, as they received an apathetic response even in strongly National-voting areas such as Highfield. In fact, the entire episode was counterproductive, as it left a legacy of resentment in Timaru at what was perceived as undue interference by the divisional office.

On its part, the divisional office was frustrated at the poor level of activity and motivation shown by the party in Timaru, the divisional chair in April 1948 stating that he "deplored the apathy evidenced by the absence of regular Branch meetings... in Timaru."<sup>75</sup> It was quite true that the attendance at and frequency of National Party branch meetings in Timaru was haphazard at best, with only the Women's and Youth branches maintaining a stable level of membership. In fact, compared to the Labour Party, the level of membership of the National Party was quite healthy. However, it was not party membership *per se* which gave Labour its strength, but the activity and commitment of those members and, more importantly, the support of affiliated unions. The National Party had no equivalent affiliated bodies to support it. According to party records, in April 1949, the National Party in Timaru had 2269 members in eleven branches, compared to Labour's 751 members in seven branches. However, Labour also had an additional 3354 members of twenty-one affiliated unions to contribute financially to the campaign fund.<sup>76</sup> Also crucial to Labour's success were its volunteer campaign workers, who were more active and motivated than their National counterparts. This was noted by members of the National Party themselves; for example by the Hospital Branch who observed that the Labour Party was very active in inviting nurses and other hospital staff to their functions.<sup>77</sup> The problem of apathy and inactivity was not limited to the lower levels of the National Party, either: in his report of April 1949, the electorate chair urged that there must be a change to the present state of almost absolute inactivity by senior branch members.<sup>78</sup>

A financial report from March 1953 demonstrated the effect that Carr's incumbency was having on National. The report conceded that "in an electorate which has not the advantage of having a sitting member it has always been difficult to present a case to supporters to donate sufficient funds." Squeezing subscription funds from members was a constant battle, and an attempt to raise

<sup>74</sup> Timaru National Party Minute Books, 7 September 1948.

<sup>75</sup> Timaru National Party Minute Books, 13 April 1948.

<sup>76</sup> Timaru National Party Minute Books, 12 April 1949; and *N.Z.L.P. Annual Conference Report*, 1950.

<sup>77</sup> Timaru National Party Minute Books, 19 October 1948.

<sup>78</sup> Timaru National Party Minute Books, 12 April 1949.

funds through a direct appeal to 200 firms and individuals had had very disappointing results.<sup>79</sup> Worse was to come for the party in 1953, when it lost its secretary and closed its office. The situation had improved by the time it came to prepare for the 1954 election, however. While membership had fallen, another financial drive had been relatively successful. It was the Women's section of the party who had remained strong and active throughout the period, organising social functions and raising campaign funds.<sup>80</sup>

Meanwhile, tension between the local party organisation and the national-level organisation continued to bubble away, the Timaru organisation committee complaining about what it saw as the National Party's "domineering, dictatorial attitude", and a lack of support from head office. The frustration of the local party with the national organisation was palpable, and they went so far as to praise Carr, in their internal correspondence at least, for his criticisms of the National government. Discussing a letter that Carr had written to the editor of the *Timaru Herald*, party members agreed that Carr's analysis:

was exactly as members of the Committee had so often said, the country is bureaucratically controlled: The Rev. Clyde Carr is to be congratulated on bringing this before the public. It reads well from a Labour member when a National government is in power on a supposed platform of free enterprise.<sup>81</sup>

A visit to the electorate in May 1957 by Dean Eyre, Minister of Social Security, intended to build enthusiasm amongst the National faithful in Timaru was described by the Timaru chair as a "flop", "worthless" and "a mass of baloney."<sup>82</sup>

## 1949 Election

In August 1949, debate over the introduction of compulsory military training created a bitter dispute within the Timaru branch of the Labour Party. Carr had not opposed the introduction of compulsory military training in caucus.<sup>83</sup> However, several long-standing party members were bitterly opposed to the measure, and the matter caused personal antagonisms to flare. The issue

<sup>79</sup> Timaru National Party Minute Books, 23 March 1953.

<sup>80</sup> Timaru National Party Minute Books, 23 March 1954.

<sup>81</sup> Timaru National Party Minute Books, 7 May 1957.

<sup>82</sup> Timaru National Party Minute Books, 7 May 1957.

became a focus for dissatisfaction with Carr from within the branch, and once again, he faced competition for the Timaru candidacy. Carr won the vote within the branch, but a fairly large minority of the branch voted against him.<sup>84</sup> More damaging at a wider level were the resignations from the L.R.C. over the issue. After 1949, membership of the Labour Party in Timaru went into steady decline during the 1950s, falling from 855 in 1949 to 269 in 1957.<sup>85</sup> All over the country, the issue was having a similarly destructive effect at a grass-roots level.<sup>86</sup>

After Acland's encouraging result in 1946, the National Party identified Timaru as one of eight Labour-held seats to be targeted for special attention at the 1949 election. This strategy was very successful: of the eight seats targeted in this way, only Timaru remained in Labour's hands after the election.<sup>87</sup> The tide of national opinion was running against Labour. The National Party showed a new political confidence, shifting their rhetoric away from a focus on the potential disaster of "ultimate Socialism" under Labour, to promoting the positive values of personal freedom, initiative and self-sufficiency. The candidate for Timaru, Jack Lockington was a great exponent of this philosophy, and a strong opponent for Carr. Originally from the West Coast, Lockington, like Acland in 1946, claimed to have been "brought up in the Liberal tradition," and saw himself as a political descendent of Richard Seddon.<sup>88</sup> Lockington was a strong speaker and campaigner, and carried with him considerable kudos from having served as an Air Force pilot during the Second World War. He often played on his military experience during the campaign.<sup>89</sup>

Three months before the beginning of the campaign, Lockington arranged meetings all over the electorate in order to introduce himself to National Party supporters. He was rightfully concerned with the poor turnout at these meetings: at Washdyke, a booth which National had narrowly won for the first time in 1946, only one member attended the meeting, while other meetings were called off altogether.<sup>90</sup> Despite this inauspicious start, Lockington carried out an energetic and highly effective campaign. At his opening meeting at the Scottish Hall, in front of an audience of five hundred, Lockington spoke of the need to reduce taxation to give ordinary people the freedom to decide where their own money was spent. He complained about price rises and import restrictions

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<sup>83</sup> Grant, "Anti-Conscription, Conscription and the Referendum," p. 140.

<sup>84</sup> Michael Bassett's notes from Timaru Labour Party Branch Minute Books, August 1949.

<sup>85</sup> *N.Z.L.P. Annual Conference Report*, 1949 to 1957.

<sup>86</sup> Keith Sinclair, *Walter Nash* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1976), p. 274.

<sup>87</sup> Barry Gustafson, *The First 50 years : A History of the New Zealand National Party* (Auckland: Reed Methuen, 1986), p. 53.

<sup>88</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 25 November 1949.

<sup>89</sup> *ibid.*

under Labour and claimed that by increasing production, tightening the eligibility criteria for benefits and cutting tax rates, National would increase the standard of living without cutting the social security scheme.<sup>91</sup> The idea that controls and high taxes were stifling individuals' freedom was characteristic of all of Lockington's speeches. He was also critical of Labour for being dominated by the militant unions and for failing to bring more secondary industry to Timaru.

Lockington's meetings were generally well attended, and he dealt with interjectors more effectively than previous National candidates. He was also a more inventive campaigner than his predecessors. One of his innovations was to hold three large outdoor meetings in the suburbs of Timaru on the eve of the election.<sup>92</sup> Lockington had a number of novel suggestions of how the South Canterbury economy could be developed, arguing that primary production in South Canterbury could be massively increased by fertilising and developing much of the land which was currently considered marginal.<sup>93</sup>

The *Timaru Herald* presented contrasting images of Carr as a dutiful "yes man" and Lockington as young and relatively inexperienced, but very much "his own man". Lockington brought the "eagerness of youth" to the campaign, whereas Carr, the newspaper claimed, "tend[ed] to speak from habit; already he is flogging the arguments he used in other campaigns...." The description of Carr as a political "yes man" is surprising, given his history of political radicalism and controversy:

Mr Carr has kept unimaginatively to the "party line." It is clear that he has no intention of ever being anything more than a dutiful cipher of the Labour Party, which is controlled largely by forces outside Parliament. Those who are content to see the country going the way the... extra-parliamentary Labour Party [a reference to large trade unions] determine, will cling to Mr Carr, knowing that in essentials he is prepared to allow others to do his political thinking for him.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Timaru National Party Minute Books, 16 August 1949.

<sup>91</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 4 November 1949.

<sup>92</sup> *ibid.*, 30 November 1949.

<sup>93</sup> *ibid.*, 29 November 1949.

<sup>94</sup> *ibid.*

Carr's campaign was characterised by small meeting attendances and relatively hostile crowds. The low attendance at Carr's meetings did not necessarily reflect a lack of support for Carr, but rather was a symptom of the changing nature of election campaigning, and of a certain over-familiarity with Carr. After fourteen years in power, the Labour government were now held accountable for almost every aspect of life that voters found to be not to their satisfaction, including goods shortages, price rises, housing, the state of the health system, and even the poor quality of records played on the New Zealand Broadcasting Service and the lack of good motion pictures showing at cinemas!<sup>95</sup> Carr adopted the same rhetoric and strategies which had served him well in previous elections: describing the achievements of the Labour Party during its time in power and, most importantly, his own achievements on behalf of his electors. His speechmaking was not up to the standard of his earlier campaigns, however, and tended to consist of either dry expositions on export prices and the exchange rate, or generalised promises of increased population and production under a Labour government.

As ever, Carr emphasised his local service, for example in a print advertisement which explicitly listed his achievements for the electorate:

Airport - land acquired and work imminent

Radio Station 3XC is on the air

Railway Station and Yards – plans approved for early construction

Harbour developments – an improved harbour for city and country

Dispersal and development of Industry – some in operation, others being negotiated

Housing – Marchwiell and other areas

Extension of telephone services

Soil erosion – one of the early advocates for conservation

Sea erosion - action at present being taken.

AND He has ALWAYS been available to give assistance to business firms and individuals.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> *ibid.*, 25 November 1949.

<sup>96</sup> *ibid.*, 29 November 1949.

For the most part, however, Carr had little new to say, and spent most of the campaign reiterating Labour's past policy innovations, many of which were now also part of National's platform.

Coverage of election day in the *Timaru Herald* was dominated by comment on the significance of National's win, the first change of government since 1935.<sup>97</sup> Despite the nationwide swing to National and the quality of his opponent, Carr actually increased his majority to 832 votes or six percent of the total vote in Timaru. Carr was one of only four Labour MPs to have increased their majority in 1949.<sup>98</sup> The fact that Carr was able to defeat such a vigorous and able candidate, while putting in a fairly perfunctory effort himself, is suggestive of the "voter credit" he had built up over six elections, and the strength of the Labour-voting proclivity of Timaru.

### 1951 Election

The 1951 general election was called less than two years after National's victory in 1949, in the wake of the waterfront dispute from February to April 1951. The dispute placed labour relations and the issue of the political power of unions at the forefront of national political debate. Intensifying the ideological division between the two major parties, was in the international climate of Cold War and the fear of the spread of communism. The waterfront dispute was often mentioned in the context of the international "war on communism."<sup>99</sup> On election day, Labour suffered one of its greatest defeats.

Increasing use of mass print and broadcast media had substantially changed the nature of campaigning since beginning of Carr's political career in 1928. Attendance at campaign meetings had dropped away to the point where the only people who could be relied upon to attend meetings were the party faithful. Candidates responded to the drop in meeting attendance by holding fewer meetings over the course of the campaign. Accordingly, newspapers and radio played an increasingly significant role in disseminating candidates' political views to the public. Campaign meetings had become in effect proto-press conferences, sometimes attended only by a handful of party faithful and a reporter.

Carr's opponent in 1951 was the sitting mayor, W.L. Richards. Richards had been on the Timaru Borough Council since 1944, and was elected mayor in 1950. Originally a school teacher,

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<sup>97</sup> *ibid.*, 1 December 1949.

<sup>98</sup> *Press*, 30 August 1951.

<sup>99</sup> Noted by Anna Green, *British Capital, Antipodean Labour: Working the New Zealand Waterfront, 1915-1951* (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 2001), p. 153.

Richards had been resident in Timaru for 23 years at the time of the election.<sup>100</sup> His profile as a local politician was largely built on the prominent role he had taken during the waterfront dispute earlier in the year. As mayor, Richards had been instructed by the Waterfront Commission to establish an Emergency Committee in Timaru to oversee the loading of cargo by army servicemen on to ships in the port.<sup>101</sup> Richards received almost daily exposure in the newspapers making announcements on the current progress in port throughout the dispute, and was present as each ship loaded by servicemen departed port. These were symbolic events, showing the resolve of the people in the face of industrial unrest and the ability of servicemen to minimise the disruption caused by the watersiders. As chair of the Emergency Committee, Richards was responsible for making public announcements during the dispute. In this role, Richards was often the bearer of good news, for example when he announced the arrival of 250 tonnes of tobacco and cigarettes to relieve the South Island's tobacco shortage.<sup>102</sup>

Although the effects of the waterfront dispute in Timaru were relatively minor and shortages of essential household goods were more a threat than a reality, the dispute created a great deal of antipathy towards the waterside unions. The National Party capitalised on this by proclaiming itself the enemy of militant unions, and by consciously conflating the threat of militant unions with the wider perceived threat of the international spread of communism. When the President of the National Party, Sir Wilfrid Sim, spoke at Timaru during the dispute he made this connection explicit: "the strength and unity of the National Party might well prove the sheet and anchor and salvation of New Zealand in the dose of the Communist "Cold War" to which [the country is] being subjected at present in the form of the strike of the Watersiders."<sup>103</sup>

The national tide of opinion and high profile of his opponent gave Carr serious cause for concern at the 1951 election. However, a stroke of luck worked in his favour. Before he could hold his first campaign meeting, Richards was stuck down by influenza and had to be hospitalised. Richards' meetings for the rest of the week were cancelled and in fact Richards only managed to hold one meeting the following week, leaving him just one week in which to run his campaign. As a show of good grace, Carr postponed his first week of meetings also. As well as severely limiting his ability to campaign, Richards' illness created doubt in the minds of the electors as to his fitness for

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<sup>100</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 30 August 1951.

<sup>101</sup> *ibid.*, 12 March 1951.

<sup>102</sup> *ibid.*, 4 April 1951.



the job of representing Timaru in parliament, and added fuel to rumours that he was reluctant to stand for the Timaru seat.<sup>104</sup>

As Richards lay in hospital, Prime Minister Sydney Holland addressed a capacity audience at the Theatre Royal. Holland opened his speech by reassuring his audience that Richards' sickness was not too serious, then went on at some length about how gracious Carr had been in cancelling his campaign meetings so as to not enjoy any unfair advantage over his opponent. Holland discussed the waterfront dispute, claiming that National's actions had been meant to "prize wretched Communist influence from its hiding place in the country and destroy it."<sup>105</sup> In a later speech, Deputy Prime Minister Holyoake used similarly militant language when he warned his audience to be wary of the "fifth column" in every democracy who preached peace but were trying to disarm democracy. Such people were "un-British; they were wreckers playing a Communist role.... That was exemplified by the waterfront dispute."<sup>106</sup>

Richards himself showed little of his leaders' anti-Communist fervour when he eventually held his first meeting of the campaign. Richards was obliged to deal with the issue of his health at some length, saying "I am here to show you that you have a candidate that is fit to take part in electioneering – that I am not an invalid. I am not seeking sympathy votes." Richards thanked Carr for his generosity in postponing his meetings until Richards had recovered from his illness. Next, he responded to rumours that he was a reluctant candidate:

I say in all humbleness that I believe there are better men than I who could represent my Party in this city, but for various reasons they are not able to do so, so I felt it was my duty to step into the breach. I am not ashamed of the Party, but after an exhausting period as chairman of the Emergency Committee when I worked from early morning until late at night to help keep supplies flowing smoothly through the port, I was not sure that I was fit enough to do the job. I now know that I am.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> *ibid.*, 14 April 1951.

<sup>104</sup> *ibid.*, 15 August 1951.

<sup>105</sup> *ibid.*, 18 August 1951.

<sup>106</sup> *ibid.*, 28 August 1951.

<sup>107</sup> *ibid.*, 24 August 1951.

This was remarkably poor (if honest) opening speech, and conveyed the impression of an exhausted candidate who was under some duress to stand and lacked confidence in his own abilities to do the job.

The biggest challenge of Richards' campaign, however, occurred at his final meeting outside the Crown Hotel. At a gathering described by the *Timaru Herald* as the stormiest in the history of Timaru, Richards was heckled constantly by a vocal minority in the audience, including a "an elderly woman performing a rather amateurish version of the Maori haka (perhaps unconsciously), a uniformed sailor who wanted to know some of Mr Richards' past history; backed by several reinforcements who were, perhaps, still feeling the effect of an invigorating tonic before teatime."<sup>108</sup> Richards rose to the occasion by accusing the interjectors of being "friends of the Moscow regime." In the midst of the disruptions, the content of Richards' speech was a typically uncompromising National Party interpretation of the waterfront dispute.

In the end, as a result of his illness, Richards only held around six meetings. Interestingly, Richards' illness may not have been as damaging to his campaign as it would have been to National Party candidates at earlier elections, because of the shift in the importance of meetings from events-in-themselves to proto-press conferences. Richards maintained a presence in the *Timaru Herald* even during the hiatus in his meetings by running a series of advertisements in which he expressed his opinions on issues such as price rises, socialism, the waterfront dispute, and military defence. Most of Richards' advertisements featured images of him in his mayoral robes which, while the cause of some controversy, helped to emphasise his high status, political experience, and personal commitment to the Timaru electorate.<sup>109</sup>

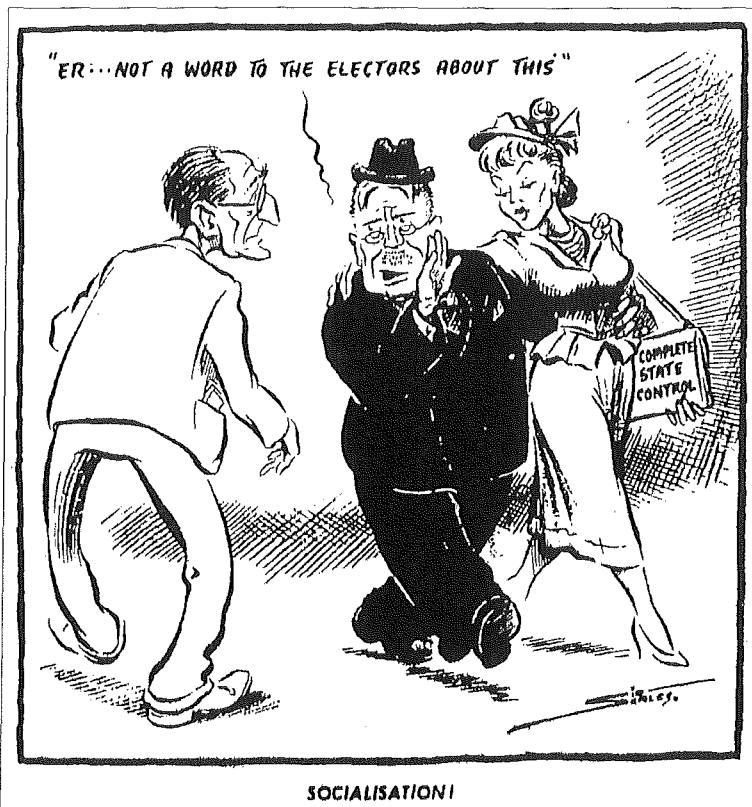
Richards adopted the rhetorical technique of associating the Labour Party with the worldwide menace of communism, running a full page advertisement immediately before the election which featured a number of specially commissioned political cartoons portraying Carr and Nash attempting to disguise their true attitudes towards socialism, the U.S.S.R., militant waterside unions, and heavy state intervention.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> *ibid.*, 1 September 1951.

<sup>109</sup> *ibid.*, 23 August 1951.

<sup>110</sup> *ibid.*, 31 August 1951.

Figure 5.1 Cartoon from Richards' campaign advertisement<sup>111</sup>

Carr was in a good position to fight the 1951 election, despite the tide of national opinion running against his party. Firstly, his opponent had fallen ill for the first two weeks of the campaign. Secondly, Carr seemed much more passionately opposed to National's policy than Richards was to Labour's. As a result, Carr's campaign was more forceful and convincing than Richards'. Carr's love of language and sense of humour meant that while attendances at his meetings was very low (with sometimes fewer than ten people attending) his amusing and memorable speeches were frequently quoted in the newspaper. Carr still loved to be provocative as he now turned his attentions to international relations during the Cold War.

Carr's campaign began on August 20, after he had postponed several of his scheduled meetings the previous week while Richards was in hospital. Ultimately, Carr's decision to postpone these meetings worked in his favour, as it earned him favourable comment from the press, the Prime Minister and from Richards himself. The postponements themselves probably did little or no damage to Carr's campaigning, as almost every meeting was rescheduled closer to election day.

<sup>111</sup> *ibid.*

With attendances at Carr's meetings being so small at this time, it is hard to believe that delaying the meetings would have had any significant negative impact on his vote. Instead, Richards' illness gave Carr the opportunity to appear gracious and generous, and he received additional exposure by making the gesture of postponing the meetings.

As his term in Timaru lengthened, Carr tended to face an increasing number of questions on outstanding local issues. These required great diplomacy, as Carr generally had to acknowledge the legitimacy of his constituents' requests, while conceding that his own efforts as MP had been unsuccessful in addressing them. When asked about the need for Pareora to have a new Post Office building, Carr responded by saying that the government received many requests which it had to prioritise and that Pareora would get a new building when the time came. At Washdyke, there were locally-oriented questions on housing and funding of local schools.<sup>112</sup> In Carr's last two meetings, at Gleniti and West End, he was confronted over progress on the police station, for which he had been lobbying since 1928. Carr claimed to have had an assurance from the Minister of Works that it would be ready within a year. In fact, the new police station would eventually open nine years later, in 1960.

Carr's natural wit and wordplay meant that his political style was well suited to the truncated style of meeting reports in the newspapers. His quips were often reported for their entertainment value, for example discussing claims a rumour that Hitler was alive and living in Argentina, Carr joked, "I do not believe that to be correct. They have found him in Holland."<sup>113</sup> At South School, Carr engaged with the audience over meat price rises, telling a story about a man who ate horse steak then choked when someone said "*whoa*."<sup>114</sup>

Carr's campaigning became more impassioned and less jovial as election day drew near, perhaps reflecting the growing realisation within the Labour Party that a large defeat loomed. At St Patrick's Hall, Carr was highly condemnatory of National's record in government, which he described as "deplorable." As government, they had relaxed all price controls, allowing essential consumer goods like butter to rise in price, increasing the burden to normal households. In Carr's eyes, National surrendered all controls "to irresponsible exploiters, profiteers and selfish

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<sup>112</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> *ibid.*, 21 August 1951.

<sup>114</sup> *ibid.*, 23 August 1951.

individuals with no sense of social responsibility." Any economy needed controls, Carr argued, something that National did not understand:

remove controls and chaos follows. After all, what does Socialism mean but planned economy and playing the game according to the rules. Apparently, a game without rules – like football without a referee – is the Nationalist conception of Society. It is also termed 'rugged individualism'.<sup>115</sup>

Carr's other chief criticism of National's administration was that it had placed repressive controls on the country during the waterfront dispute. Carr claimed that if National won the election, it would mean the most repressive legislation New Zealand had ever experienced. Carr also discussed international relations, emphasising the need for New Zealand to make its own decisions in this sphere rather than simply becoming the puppet of America. Here again, Carr's radical side emerged, expressing considerable cynicism at American companies' newfound close trade relations with Japan, and stating that New Zealand should refuse to fight in support of corrupt governments, such as those opposed by Communists in China and Korea.<sup>116</sup>

The waterfront dispute and the passions it aroused in voters loomed large in letters to the editor. One writer associated Holland's fight against the militant unions with Christianity, the Cold War and the universal right to personal freedom: "If the Timaru electors will vote so as to increase Mr Holland's majority and reduce the opposition by one, we shall have scored one point in the terribly real global war whose shadow is growing ever darker."<sup>117</sup> Another letter referred specifically to Carr's far-left politics: "Our amiable Rev Clyde Carr... was instrumental in the leading of the singing of the 'Red Flag' during a past session of Parliament, [and] is on the committee of the 'Friendly Relations with Russia.' [sic] Seemingly he has not changed his little 'red' coat."<sup>118</sup>

Election day saw Carr's majority drop to 564, or four percent of the total vote in Timaru. Labour suffered its heaviest ever defeat, winning just thirty seats in parliament and 45.8 percent of the vote, to National's fifty seats and 54.0 percent. In his election day speech, Carr thanked his committee, and promised to continue to serve the electorate to the utmost of his ability. Richards

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<sup>115</sup> *ibid.*, 29 August 1951.

<sup>116</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> *ibid.*, 21 August 1951.

was gracious in defeat, thanking Carr for the courtesy he had shown during the campaign: "Mr Carr could have made it very difficult for me in a perfectly legitimate manner, but he never changed the attitude he adopted from the start, and I would like publicly to thank Mr Carr for his forbearance."<sup>119</sup> In its editorial on the election, the *Timaru Herald* congratulated Carr, saying that "friends and opponents alike agree that Mr Carr places himself ungrudgingly and impartially at the service of his constituents. This known conscientiousness has helped him in his election contests."<sup>120</sup> Possibly, the idea that Carr's constituency work was the cause of the Labour's success in Timaru was more palatable to the editors of the newspaper than accepting that the electorate was by its very nature strongly inclined to Labour voting.

The 1951 election in Timaru was a good example of how fortunate circumstance played a role in Carr's career. At the beginning of the campaign, Richards appeared to be a serious threat to Carr. The National Party had come closer to winning the seat at the previous two elections than at any other time in Carr's career. Nationally, there was a strong swing towards National, Richards was the sitting mayor of Timaru and had had a high-profile role during the waterfront dispute. However, each of these potential threats to Carr was mitigated through factors outside of Carr's control. Firstly, the negative effects of the waterfront dispute on the general population of Timaru were kept to a minimum. The port had seen relatively little conflict during the dispute, and the Timaru watersiders were among the first in the country to reregister. Secondly, Richards was a lack-lustre campaigner, who was obviously still exhausted from his efforts during the dispute six months earlier, and who at times expressed ambivalence about standing as a National candidate. He then fell ill for two-thirds of the campaign. This not only gave Carr the benefit of fighting an opponent who was unwell, but the opportunity to gain credit for curtailing his own campaign in sympathy for them. Nevertheless, Carr rose to the occasion, campaigning with a political savvy and energy that he had been lacking at his previous two campaigns.

### 1954 Election

National's share of the vote at the 1954 election dropped by ten percentage points from its 1951 level and was now only 0.2 percent higher than Labour's. This change in the political landscape was brought about in large part by the emergence of the Social Credit Party which, at its first

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<sup>118</sup> *ibid.*, 31 August 1951.

<sup>119</sup> *ibid.*, 3 September 1951.

election, won 11.1 percent of the vote. In a period of relative prosperity, the policies of the two major parties had converged, which had the effect of intensifying political apathy within the electorate. According to Keith Sinclair, "the lack of fervour [at the 1954 election] reflected the fact that Labour and National had politically drawn so close together that a failure to tell one from the other was excusable."<sup>121</sup> Timaruvians had as much reason as anyone to be apathetic, and there, as in the rest of the country, it was Social Credit who demonstrated and attracted the most enthusiasm. The presence of Social Credit at the election placed Carr in a similar situation to 1943, facing a strong third party candidate representing a political position that Carr had himself had once held. At the 1943 election, Carr was publicly called to account over his earlier support for Lee. In 1954, he had to justify his past advocacy of Social Credit.

The Social Credit candidate in Timaru was George Edmonds, a thirty-four year old refrigerator factory manager from Christchurch. While his own advertising emphasised his character and war service (he had been wounded four times during his service in Libya, Crete, Greece and Western Desert) more than any political agenda or expertise, Edmonds conducted an energetic and innovative campaign, and managed to attract over twenty percent of the Timaru vote, a feat only bettered by a Social Credit candidate in a provincial town seat by Marks in Wanganui. The National Party stood yet another uninspiring socially conservative candidate in 1954 in Vic Wilson. Wilson had moved to Timaru at the age of four, and attended Timaru Boys' High School. He then became a farmer, rising through the ranks to become a member of the Executive of Federated Farmers. Wilson had some campaign experience, having stood unsuccessfully for National in Riccarton in 1946.<sup>122</sup>

Carr's campaign in 1954 was notably later starting and more subdued than in previous years. Carr he may have judged that Edmonds would take votes away from National, rather than Labour, and thus split the conservative vote. Alternately, Carr, now sixty-eight, may have felt that he had already reached the great majority of his electors at previous elections, and that he had little to gain by stretching himself. Furthermore, Carr would have realised that campaign meetings were no longer attended by large groups of uncommitted voters. In fact, meeting attendances were often as

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<sup>120</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> Sinclair, *Nash*, p. 294.

<sup>122</sup> *Press*, 26 October 1954.

low as single figures and Carr cancelled at least one meeting during the 1954 campaign due to lack of interest.<sup>123</sup>

Carr's campaign began with two small meetings at Gleniti and Kensington. At these meetings, Carr outlined his achievements as a local representative and Labour's family welfare, housing and superannuation policies.<sup>124</sup> Under National, Carr claimed, the country's offshore reserves had been depleted, the cost of living had increased, and national levels of savings were down. Furthermore, National had done a poor job of marketing New Zealand's overseas produce.<sup>125</sup> Initially, Carr made little effort to criticise the Social Credit Party. However, once Edmonds had brought up the issue of Carr's previous support for Social Credit policies, and had suggested that Carr's current opposition to Social Credit was hypocritical, he was forced to address the issue. Rather than issuing a comprehensive denial, Carr admitted to having supported some aspects of monetary reform, in particular the establishment of a central reserve bank and state ownership of the Bank of New Zealand. He admitted to criticising Savage in the late 1930s for being too cautious in his monetary reform legislation, but claimed that he had since realised the wisdom of Savage's approach of not legislating too far ahead of public opinion.<sup>126</sup> In fact, Carr's main opposition to Social Credit in 1954 was party political rather than being based on substantive objections to the party's economic ideas. Carr accused Social Credit of being anti-Socialist and of supporting the "tories."<sup>127</sup>

Perhaps as a means of increasing his local prestige by casting for himself a role as an "elder statesman", Carr emphasised his political achievements at a national level to a far greater extent in 1954 than he had done at earlier elections. He described his work as a member of a deputation of five Labour MPs who advised Holland on possible solutions to the waterfront dispute, and as chair of the parliamentary committee which had had the massive job of reassessing wartime regulations after the war.<sup>128</sup> Carr also made more use of his position as incumbent MP to increase his public profile than at previous campaigns. During the campaign, he appeared opening the new Army Administration Block and the new Old Peoples' Home.<sup>129</sup> Such appearances helped reinforce in the minds of electors the good work that Carr was doing for the electorate. Even traditionally

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<sup>123</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 29 October 1954.

<sup>124</sup> *ibid.*, 22 October 1954.

<sup>125</sup> *ibid.*, 2 November 1954.

<sup>126</sup> *ibid.*, 11 November 1954.

<sup>127</sup> *ibid.*, 5 November 1954.



conservative groups appreciated Carr's efforts, for example the Chamber of Commerce, which Carr thanked for its constant courtesy and cooperation at his R.S.A. Hall meeting.<sup>130</sup>

Social Credit candidate George Edmonds' campaign was remarkable for not only the energy he devoted to it, but for his novel approach to campaigning, which included the innovative use of technology. Edmonds' meetings were generally better attended than those of Carr or Wilson. This was not so much a sign of widespread support, but rather the result of the electorate responding to the novelty of a third candidate. There was widespread interest in Social Credit's policy, and Edmonds' meetings were unique in the campaign in that they provoked searching policy questions and many interjections, both friendly and otherwise, from the audience. Nationally, Social Credit were riding a wave of popularity, and, like Labour's in its early years, "Social Credit meetings had a revivalist atmosphere."<sup>131</sup> What the local Social Credit organisation lacked in resources, it made up for in enthusiasm and ingenuity. In the second half of the campaign, Edmonds held a number of meetings each evening in the same suburb. One evening, he held three meetings on street corners around Marchwiell, each attended by between 33 and 50 people despite the teeming rain. These were very high attendances in comparison to Wilson and Carr's meetings.<sup>132</sup> At other times, Edmonds held up to five such street corner meetings in a day. This was an impressive innovation in campaign technique. While the Labour and National campaign organisations were investing time and money organising meetings in community halls which were often attended by less than ten people, Edmonds reached far more people at far less cost. Even more unusual and innovative were Edmonds' "virtual meetings", where recordings of his speeches were played on the street up to seven times a day.<sup>133</sup> While these speeches would obviously have lacked the appeal and impact of a real campaign meeting, they were nevertheless a way for Edmonds to reach many more voters than would otherwise have been possible.

Edmonds also demonstrated a good understanding of the electorate in his choice of policy advocacy. Recognising the importance of industrial development to the electorate, he emphasised the potential for Social Credit to help Timaru reach its full potential as an industrial centre. Social Credit would allow the creation of interest-free loans to the people, allowing them to buy local

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<sup>128</sup> *ibid.*, 12 November 1954.

<sup>129</sup> *ibid.*, 29 October and 11 November 1954.

<sup>130</sup> *ibid.*, 12 November 1954.

<sup>131</sup> Sinclair, *Nash*, p. 294.

<sup>132</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 3 November 1954.

assets such as the Town Hall and the gasworks. Edmonds claimed that Carr believed in Social Credit, had done all his life, and was only denying it at this election because of the imperatives of party discipline.

Wilson proved himself to be a worthy successor to the previous dour National Party candidates in Timaru, emphasising the importance of self-reliance, initiative and thrift, of competition rather than state control, love for Queen and country, and six o'clock closing. Later in the campaign, Wilson described his concern at rising levels of juvenile delinquency and declining moral standards. At West End, he voiced his support for the death penalty and increased spending on military defence.<sup>134</sup> Wilson also related his conservative Christian moralising to the provision of state welfare, specifically family benefits, the health system, and superannuation. Wilson was not an enormously able, experienced or inspirational speaker, and he often faced hostile audiences. At Washdyke, an angry audience of nine harangued him over the local water supply, one of whom claimed, "It is time we had another Bob Semple."<sup>135</sup> At a meeting for women at Trinity Church two days later, Wilson once again came up against a small but hostile audience which confronted him with many questions on a wide range of policy issues, frequent interjections and foot-stomping.<sup>136</sup> It is likely that both these examples were the result of a coordinated effort on the part of the Labour Party to disrupt Wilson's campaigning.

Wilson's weak campaigning probably accounted in part for the success of Social Credit in Timaru. The National vote in 1954 dropped by 13.4 percentage points from its 1951 level, but the Labour vote only dropped by 7.1 percentage points. Meanwhile, Edmonds attracted 20.5 percent of the total vote in Timaru for his party. While his share of the vote dropped by seven percentage points, Carr's majority more than doubled, to 10.2 percent of the total vote. In his acceptance speech, Carr acknowledged the assistance he had received from "those not of a Labour persuasion" and promised to "continue to serve all [his constituents] irrespective of party affiliation."<sup>137</sup> Even the *Timaru Herald* had come grudgingly to admire Carr's achievement in Timaru, once again emphasising his independence and constituency service rather than his political alignment:

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<sup>133</sup> *ibid.*, 2.

<sup>134</sup> *ibid.*, 11 November 1954.

<sup>135</sup> *ibid.*, 3 November 1954.

<sup>136</sup> *ibid.*, 5 November 1954.

<sup>137</sup> *ibid.*, 15 November 1954.

Mr Carr's hold on Timaru has been retained not so much on account of his party allegiance as by his earnest application to the needs of the community he has from time to time been elected to serve. Although he is a sound party man, and that is proved by the positions he has held in the Labour movement, the requirements of his constituents are Mr Carr's first concern.<sup>138</sup>

### 1957 Election

In 1957, Labour built upon the electoral gains they had made in 1954 to win the election, albeit with a tiny majority. After its encouraging result in 1954, Social Credit's share of the national vote in 1957 dropped to just 7.2 percent. The 1957 election saw another three-way contest in Timaru. The National candidate, Alf Davey, was the sitting member for Waimate, a rural electorate which had disappeared in the recent electoral redistribution. The third candidate in 1957 was a farmer from Fairlie, C. Isitt, standing for Social Credit.<sup>139</sup> Isitt was by no mean as capable or energetic a campaigner as Edmonds had been in 1954, although there was little doubting his passion for the cause. Despite Isitt's enthusiasm, election day saw Social Credit's share of the Timaru vote plummet from 20.5 percent to just 3.6 percent of the vote.

Despite his experience as MP for Waimate, Davey was a mediocre campaigner. His speechmaking consisted of fairly typical National Party claims about the benefits of freedom and private enterprise, and the threat of price rises under a Labour government. Like previous National candidates, Davey applauded thrift, independence and self-reliance as character traits.<sup>140</sup> Davey made some effort to relate his speeches to specific audiences. At Marchwiell, he spoke on National's achievements with regard to housing, an issue of particular relevance to that suburb.<sup>141</sup> At rural Gleniti, Davey argued that more wheat should be grown in South Canterbury to guard against shortage if supply from Australia was cut off. When questioned, however, he had to concede that there was nothing in National Party policy to encourage this.<sup>142</sup>

Davey's greatest weakness as a campaigner was his inability to respond to pressure from a hostile audience. At his meeting at Labour stronghold Marchwiell, Davey's responses to questions were often evasive, unnecessarily defensive, or simply weak. When questioned on differential prices for

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<sup>138</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>139</sup> *ibid.*, 25 November 1957.

<sup>140</sup> *ibid.*, 23 November 1957.

<sup>141</sup> *ibid.*

electricity, a major source of contention for Marchwiell residents, Davey admitted outright that “there is nothing in the National Party policy to deal with this”. Other flippant or vague answers included his response to a question on the excess of butter on the international market which was affecting the export price: “Maybe they’ll want it someday”; his response to a complaint about high retail prices under National: “I know it isn’t easy to stop them”; and his response to a question about the shortage of competent engineers on the railways: “I can’t explain why it occurred. I don’t recall the incident; I may have been out of the house.”<sup>143</sup> Many of these questions were obviously asked by Labour supporters, suggesting the continuing effectiveness of the local party organisation in putting National candidates to the test in the campaign meeting context. With the declining number of audience members at most meetings, it was becoming easier to “load” a meeting with partisan interjectors.

In a series of columns in the *Timaru Herald* entitled “A.J. Davey comments”, Davey emphasised the philosophical differences between the parties, which he described as an opposition between Socialism and free enterprise.<sup>144</sup> Davey’s focus on the rhetoric of political philosophy was understandable as there was no great distinction in practice between the policy proposals on offer from the two major parties. Occasionally, the two parties were making exactly the same offers to electors, for example during the campaign in Timaru, both Carr and Davey promised to provide assembly halls for all schools.<sup>145</sup>

Much of Carr’s campaigning was devoted to criticising National’s administration since 1949. His main line of argument was that National had placed the country in a balance of payments crisis by allowing its overseas cash reserves to be spent on luxury imports “like cooked snails, or frogs legs, tablecloths priced at £100... [and] very rare china”, instead of saving for less prosperous times. Now, Carr argued, internal monetary policy was so tight that the country was at risk of entering recession.<sup>146</sup> Elsewhere, Carr argued that New Zealand needed to develop its internal markets to reduce its reliance on export revenue, and needed to work harder to encourage technical experts to stay in the country.<sup>147</sup> He claimed that National’s only success in government had been where its policy had followed Labour’s, and promised to encourage manufacturers to relocate to the South

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<sup>142</sup> *ibid.*, 26 November 1957.

<sup>143</sup> *ibid.*, 19 November 1957.

<sup>144</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>145</sup> *ibid.*, 26 and 25 November 1957.

<sup>146</sup> *ibid.*, 21 November 1957.

Island on the grounds of its plentiful electricity.<sup>148</sup> Labour Party leader Walter Nash made a successful speech at Scottish Hall, where he also dealt with industrial development. Nash chose his subject matter carefully to suit the electorate, speaking on the need to further develop and decentralise industry to secondary towns like Timaru and Lower Hutt.<sup>149</sup>

A recording of one of Carr's campaign speeches from 1957 survives, providing good evidence of Carr's ability as a speaker. In the speech, Carr sounded relaxed and humorous, although his age was beginning to show in his sometimes garbled allegorical economic and philosophical pronouncements. Also apparent was Carr's continuing interest in monetary policy:

The money that's available is being issued and withdrawn the whole time – like water in a reservoir or tank. It always seems to me to be better overflowing than running dry.... There should always be enough money available for the production and purchase by the community of those goods and services it is capable of producing....<sup>150</sup>

Carr would not, however, go so far as to explicitly support Social Credit, whom he described in the same speech as "avowed Tories and capitalists – the sworn enemies of Labour." In this speech, Carr was also outspoken on international relations, and succinctly expressed his view of the Cold War: "Most of what they tell us of our alleged enemies is palpably untrue. Nobody wants war unless it is the big corporations. And you don't find big corporations in the U.S.S.R." He was further critical of the American administration for wasting money on developing nuclear weapons rather than feeding the population of starving people in the world, and for putting a Nazi in charge of N.A.T.O.

When the perennial Timaru issue of the police station cropped up again early in the campaign, Carr claimed to have been assured by the Commissioner of Works that the plans for the new police station would definitely go ahead. He claimed to have been pursuing the issue a lot recently as the whole affair had become a "ghastly joke".<sup>151</sup> He received something of a boost a fortnight later when, less than a week before election day, the Minister of Police announced confirmation of a

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<sup>147</sup> *ibid.*, 13 November 1957.

<sup>148</sup> *ibid.*, 29 November 1957.

<sup>149</sup> *ibid.*, 20 November 1957.

<sup>150</sup> Clyde Carr, 14 November 1957, D4141, Sound Archives, Christchurch.

<sup>151</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 7 November 1957.

new £78000 three-storey police station for Timaru.<sup>152</sup> Carr's print advertising had become slightly more sophisticated over the years, but his central theme remained the same: service. In one advertisement, he compared himself to an automobile, asking voters to continue to support "the Carr that has proved successful through the years by performance, service and reliability."<sup>153</sup>

The *Timaru Herald* decried public apathy during the campaign, an apathy it blamed on the prosperity the country was enjoying at the present time. It mentioned that both Isitt and Carr had had to abandon meetings due to lack of interest, and described the election, which was "now fluttering to a close", as one of the tamest in Timaru's history.<sup>154</sup> Aside from the bemoaning the poor turnout at political meetings, the *Timaru Herald* made its customary endorsement of the National Party candidate, arguing that Labour's policies appealed to the laziness in people by offering reward without effort.<sup>155</sup> However, an election survey run by the newspaper on the eve of the election was more sympathetic to Carr. The piece mentioned that Carr had defeated some formidable contenders over the previous 29 years, and argued that his incumbency was "due largely to his outstanding personal attention to his constituents."<sup>156</sup>

The electorate rewarded Carr with another healthy majority on election day. Support for the Social Credit Party within Timaru was reduced by 16.9 percentage points. Labour and National picked up roughly half the difference each, leaving Carr with a similarly comfortable majority over National to the one he had enjoyed in 1954. After his acceptance speech, during which he thanked the voters, his opponents and his local party organisation, Carr also thanked the newspaper reporters, as usual, but not the subeditors: "I am giving no unqualified thanks to the subeditors. Quite often some of them could be described by the name we gave, as boys, to some of our marbles. Do you remember? Not alleys, or taws, but -----, yes, yes you remember."<sup>157</sup> It is possible that the cause of Carr's outburst was anger that one of the full reports of his meetings, which had been paid for and arranged to run in the *Timaru Herald*, had been cut by the newspaper's subeditors without his permission or notification. The day after the publication of Carr's election day address, the Timaru Branch of the Canterbury and Westland Journalists' Union made a complaint to Walter Nash and the Director of Broadcasting over Carr's comments. Carr's

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<sup>152</sup> *ibid.*, 20 November 1957.

<sup>153</sup> *ibid.*, 29 November 1957.

<sup>154</sup> *ibid.*, 16 and 27 November 1957.

<sup>155</sup> *ibid.*, 30 November 1957.

<sup>156</sup> *ibid.*, 25 November 1957.

words were described as “deliberately offensive and irresponsible.”<sup>158</sup> The following day, Carr responded to the journalists’ complaint, claiming that he meant to use the word “stonies” which is a term he used as a child to describe marbles: “surely the implication is obvious, and sufficiently inoffensive.”<sup>159</sup> An irate letter to the editor the same day argued that Carr’s speech was “one of the most arrogant, bombastic and vitriolic ever heard.” The letter writer also described Carr’s behaviour as “scurrilous”, and facetiously added that it seemed strange that Carr had never been promoted from the backbench.

With Labour back in government, Carr was keen to impress the new Labour MPs within caucus in the hope of being elected to cabinet. Tizard remembers Carr attempting “to emphasise his vigour” by beating his chest in front of the new MPs so hard he almost collapsed.<sup>160</sup> However, Carr was passed over again, not getting past the first ballot in the caucus vote.<sup>161</sup>

Labour’s success at the 1957 election brought about a surge in party membership in Timaru, from 269 in 1957 to 744 in 1958. However, Arnold Nordmeyer’s budget the following year had a disastrous effect on the strength of the local party, as it did on branches all over the country, and by 1959 membership had dropped to just 195. Barry Gustafson, in his article on the effect of the so-called “black budget” on Labour Party branch membership in the Auckland region, found that the most significant drop in branch membership was among semi- and unskilled workers, and noted that “the feeling grew and persisted among many traditional activists, particularly those with manual-worker occupations... that the Labour Party was no longer their party or that they had lost control of it.”<sup>162</sup> Gustafson did not discuss the effect of the dissatisfaction with the 1958 budget on membership of affiliated unions within Auckland L.R.C.s. The drop in party membership in Timaru in the wake of the 1958 budget must be seen in the context of the steady decline in membership through the 1950s, as illustrated in graph 3.1 in chapter three. In this context, it appears not as a singular catastrophe, but rather as yet another (albeit large) nail in the coffin of party membership. Importantly, membership of affiliated unions within the Timaru L.R.C. fared

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<sup>157</sup> *ibid.*, 2 December 1957.

<sup>158</sup> *ibid.*, 3 December 1957. It is not clear exactly what term Carr used to cause such offence. The word must have sounded similar to “stonies” and have been offensive enough for the *Timaru Herald* to refuse to print it.

<sup>159</sup> *ibid.*, 4 December 1957.

<sup>160</sup> Robert Tizard to Colin Brown, 16 February 1996.

<sup>161</sup> Sinclair, *Nash*, p. 304.

<sup>162</sup> Barry Gustafson, “Labour’s Lost Legions : The Second Labour Government 1957-60 and Grassroots Party Membership in the Auckland Region,” in *New Zealand Journal of History* 10, no. 2 (1976), pp. 144, 157.

better. While the large Hotel and Restaurant Employees' Union (which claimed over six hundred members in 1959) disappeared from the list of affiliated unions in Timaru after 1961, and membership of the Workers' Union dropped by three hundred, membership of all other unions was unaffected.<sup>163</sup>

Figure 5.2 Clyde Carr, possibly at a visit of the Commonwealth Chief Scout, c. 1960<sup>164</sup>



<sup>163</sup> *N.Z.L.P. Annual Conference Reports, 1958-1962.*

<sup>164</sup> South Canterbury Museum Photographic Collection 00022938.



## 1960 Election

A matter of weeks before the 1960 election, Carr addressed an audience at the opening of the new police station in Timaru. This must have been a highly significant moment for him, as the battle to replace the old station had gone on as long as his term in Timaru. Throughout his career, Carr had made frequent pleas to parliament for a new station, and arranged for visits by various officials to inspect the old facility. As the years wore on, the tone of Carr's regular speeches on the matter shifted from being earnest and optimistic, to a kind of resigned cynicism. In 1945, while complaining that he had been pushing for a new station for fifteen years, Carr clearly enjoyed painting a picture of the farcical conditions at the aging facility, describing how there were "holes in the floor and the roof leaked, and every time it rained the police had an active time dodging the holes in the floor and the rain coming through the roof."<sup>165</sup> Once, when inspecting the station, Carr fell through the floorboards, nearly breaking his leg.<sup>166</sup>

In his speech at the opening of the new facility, Carr outlined the many representations he had made to parliament on the issue. This gave him the opportunity of repeating some of his more memorable one-liners, amusing his audience and himself in the process. He quoted himself describing the old station as "being hopelessly antiquated and inadequate, resulting in the condition for the police force themselves of virtual lifetime imprisonment, destitute of the bare comforts of the modern jail", and as being in a condition "such as to disgrace an East End joss house." By the time of this speech in 1960, the aging Carr's speech was slightly slurred, and he sounded extremely pleased with his own eloquence, giggling frequently.<sup>167</sup>

The 1960 election saw Labour ousted from government as the country swung toward National. Carr, now seventy-four, had his majority cut to its lowest point ever: just 2.3 percent of the total vote, or 357 people. The National candidate in Timaru was once again an experienced local politician, R.E. White. A resident of South Canterbury since 1907, White had recently served two terms as mayor of Timaru, during which he had taken a special interest in housing, industrial development and social welfare.<sup>168</sup> He shared with previous National candidates an interest in rural issues and a conservative, anti-Communist outlook. He opened his campaign to an audience of

<sup>165</sup> *N.Z.P.D.*, Vol. 270, 3 October 1945.

<sup>166</sup> David Thomson and Hendrik Kagei, *A Century of Service : A History of the South Canterbury and North Otago Police* (Timaru: New Zealand Police, 1987), p. 40.

<sup>167</sup> Clyde Carr, 10 October 1960, T164, Sound Archives, Christchurch.

fifty at Otipua, arguing that young people should be encouraged on to farms. During the campaign, he expressed the view that he would like to see the Queen's head back on all New Zealand stamps, to demonstrate the country's loyalty to the monarch.<sup>169</sup>

White was an energetic and thorough candidate, and well before beginning his campaign he had undertaken a house-to-house canvass of selected areas of the town.<sup>170</sup> White took advantage of the local knowledge and visibility that he had built up as mayor during his campaign, for example at the Little Playhouse, where he spoke on the need for Timaru to employ a public relations officer to help attract industry to the area. According to White, the lack of a such a position had resulted in the loss of the opportunity of having a carpet factory locate in Timaru.<sup>171</sup> Furthermore, White claimed, Carr's long incumbency had resulted in Timaru's needs being ignored by the Labour government:

I believe that to be regarded as a safe Labour seat has not been good for this electorate, in so far as government expenditure and interest is concerned. It is time for a change to allow a National member an opportunity to prove his worth. We need strong and vigorous representation to help accelerate our development, which is the only way we can provide opportunities for young people.<sup>172</sup>

White claimed that the Labour government had not favoured Timaru as much as Auckland, Nelson and other districts in developing regional economy and infrastructure. He argued that he would represent Timaru more effectively than Carr, and that a National government would be more responsive to the issues that affected South Canterbury than a Labour government.<sup>173</sup> Only rarely did White attack Labour over the increased taxes on income, petrol, alcohol and tobacco introduced in the 1958 budget. This was, however, a major theme of National Party leader Keith Holyoake's speech at the Scottish Hall. Holyoake described Labour as having lied its way into power then increased taxes against its word.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 19 November 1960.

<sup>169</sup> *ibid.*, 15 November 1960.

<sup>170</sup> Timaru National Party Minute Books, 17 April 1961.

<sup>171</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 16 November 1960.

<sup>172</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>173</sup> *ibid.*, 24 November 1960.

<sup>174</sup> *ibid.*, 19 November 1960.

Isitt stood again for Social Credit in 1960, and again ran a mediocre campaign. There was another, far more colourful minor candidate at the 1960 election, however. J.R. Rae stood as a People's Progressive Independent candidate. His policy advocacy was an idiosyncratic mix of radical left-wing and Social Credit politics, pacifism and a state welfarism, under the slogan "Back to the Michael Joseph Savage Policy."<sup>175</sup> Towards the end of the campaign, the amount of coverage Rae was receiving in the *Timaru Herald* was perceived by the Labour Party as a threat to Carr. Rae played on this by accusing the Labour Party secretary of asking him to withdraw from the campaign. The Labour Party secretary, H. McManus, replied to Rae's accusations by saying that in fact he asked Rae to withdraw a statement he had made, not to withdraw from the campaign.<sup>176</sup>

Carr continued to face dwindling audience numbers at his meetings, and had to abandon a meeting at Kingsdown through lack of interest.<sup>177</sup> He addressed the issue of low meeting attendances in a number of his speeches, and claimed he would be better off broadcasting his speeches from radio, to let his audiences stay at home on cold nights.<sup>178</sup> Typically, Carr was able to turn what could have been a negative situation into an opportunity to display his way with words, expressing his frustration with "all this trotting around, wasting one's fragrance on the desert air."<sup>179</sup> A *Timaru Herald* editorial estimated that at least six meetings had been cancelled due to lack of interest during the campaign, and noted that other meetings more closely resembled "cosy discussion circles" than the heated debates of the past.<sup>180</sup>

In response to doubts raised by White about his effectiveness as an MP, Carr listed his achievements on behalf of Timaru: a new wing for Waimataitai School, repairs to South School, a new school at Marchwiell, a new Main School, a new school at Grantlea, and another school planned for Rimu Street.<sup>181</sup> Other local issues remained unresolved, however, in particular differential power pricing which disadvantaged residents of Marchwiell. Carr claimed to have had informally discussed the matter with Minister of Electricity Hugh Watt, but to be unsure of his

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<sup>175</sup> *ibid.*, 4 November 1960.

<sup>176</sup> *ibid.*, 25 November 1960.

<sup>177</sup> *ibid.*, 11 November 1960.

<sup>178</sup> *ibid.*, 10 November 1960.

<sup>179</sup> *ibid.*, 11 November 1960.

<sup>180</sup> *ibid.*, 17 November 1960.

<sup>181</sup> *ibid.*, 16 November 1960.

plans. At the end of his Marchwiell meeting, Carr joked that he had thought that he might have been torn limb from limb by the Citizens' Association, but was happy to be leaving in one piece.<sup>182</sup>

Carr saw the development of local industry as an essential means of keeping young people in Timaru, and during his campaign detailed his efforts in regard to bringing industry to Timaru, for example his work in getting the Tekau knitting factory to Timaru. He claimed that Timaru was losing population to expanding industrial areas like the Hutt Valley, and that, while the population of suburbs like Marchwiell was increasing, there had been no accompanying growth of industry. Carr attempted to shift the responsibility for regional economic development onto local, rather than central, government. He suggested that local authorities (such as the Timaru City Council, which White had recently led) could build large trading estates and lease the property free to businesses for a period, as had been done in Wanganui.<sup>183</sup>

Carr's progressive social views also helped distinguish him from White on the increasingly important issue of law and order. Carr believed it was essential to provide positive alternatives for problem youth, saying "you won't find people who like rowing, yachting and athletics running around with bike chains and razor blades."<sup>184</sup> To this end, he promised electors that Labour would pay for a new sports centre for Timaru, helping combat juvenile delinquency. National, on the other hand, promised tougher courts and ridiculed Labour's plans for a centrally heated prison.<sup>185</sup>

Carr also held liberal views on liquor licensing, saying that restrictions on the licensing of restaurants should be eased, as people dining at restaurants do not go just to drink, but for a meal, and should be allowed to have a drink "for their stomach's sake".<sup>186</sup> Other Labour speakers also addressed social policy issues during Carr's campaign. Phillip Holloway, Minister of Industries and Commerce, spoke about the New Zealand Opera Company and Ballet, while Walter Nash spoke on immigration, equal pay for women, and disarmament.<sup>187</sup>

Only at the end of the campaign did the issue of increased taxation under Labour's 1958 budget become an issue. At a lively meeting at Fairview, Carr was faced with a barrage of questions about the taxes introduced by Labour since 1957.<sup>188</sup> It seems highly likely most of the questions came from National supporters, because the questions asked of Carr all corresponded to specific issues

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<sup>182</sup> *ibid.*, 23 November 1960.

<sup>183</sup> *ibid.*, 17 November 1960.

<sup>184</sup> *ibid.*, 11 November 1960.

<sup>185</sup> *ibid.*, 10 November 1960.

<sup>186</sup> *Press*, 23 November 1960.

which had been recently raised by White in his speeches: tax increases, the need to get young workers onto farms, and complaints about the working conditions of bank staff as raised by the Banks' Staff Action Movement. The fact that Carr did a relatively poor job of answering these questions - simply saying he had faith in Labour's ministers - suggests that if the local National Party had adopted this tactic earlier, it may have been used far more effectively against Carr. The next night at Trinity Church Hall, the questioning was even more heated, especially on questions of the alcohol and tobacco price rises. While there were only ten people at the meeting, there was a great deal of opposition to Carr, predominantly from an audience member called Mr Gamble, who sounded like a disgruntled former Labour voter:

The blokes who voted you in – the men on the freezing works, the limeworks, and the coal heaver – have now reached the stage where in many cases their families have grown up and gone away from home. Their only pleasure now is in a few beers and a smoke and in their cars... Why did you vote to put up the tax?<sup>189</sup>

Carr was also confronted at Trinity Hall over the issue of the Timaru magistracy. In 1958, Carr had promised to vote against his own party in parliament in protest at a Ministry of Justice decision to transfer Timaru's resident stipendiary magistrate to Christchurch without replacement. After making a rousing speech in parliament on the issue, when it came to the vote, Carr could not vote against Labour because the party's numbers in the house were not strong enough. According to a *New Zealand Truth* article at the time, "Mr Carr then felt bound to support his party, governing by one vote, and in the crisis turned his face against the Opposition's attempt to support him. His volte face made his face red – and caused the faces in his electorate to redden through a more violent emotion."<sup>190</sup> At the 1960 election, Carr claimed to be working as hard as he could to get a magistrate returned to Timaru, and he had indeed brought the issue up in caucus on a number of occasions in 1959.<sup>191</sup> The issue provided a good illustration of the potential problems that could arise when support for one's party conflicted with support for one's electorate.

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<sup>187</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 12 and 18 November 1960.

<sup>188</sup> *ibid.*, 24 November 1960.

<sup>189</sup> *ibid.*, 25 November 1960.

<sup>190</sup> *N.Z. Truth*, 4 November 1958.

<sup>191</sup> New Zealand Labour Party Caucus Minute Books, 9 July and 17 September 1959.

Carr's last campaign was probably also his most difficult. White was an effective and vigorous opponent, and the nationwide tide of opinion was swinging against Labour. Carr was unable to respond convincingly to National's criticisms of him on a number of crucial issues, especially Labour's failure to attract secondary industry to Timaru, and the rise in consumer prices. Carr was now an old man, his health was beginning to deteriorate, and he was only able to hang onto the seat by the narrowest of margins. The fact that he was able to hold the seat at all given the circumstances is testament to the massive base of support he had built up during his thirty-two years in the seat.

### Retirement and Death

Whether his refusal to retire was driven by financial necessity or a single mindedness to hold the seat until he was defeated at the polls, Carr continued to represent Timaru in parliament until he was well into his seventies. In 1949, in a speech to parliament, Carr expressed his views on retirement: "there is no need to retire at sixty years, even though one is then entitled to an age benefit. I intend never to retire." Carr believed that as long as one was healthy, one should work, and that premature retirement caused mental ills: "self-expression and independence is life; their lack is death, a living death."<sup>192</sup>

By the late 1950s, however, there were persistent rumours regarding Carr's declining health. In November 1958, Carr felt obliged to respond to rumours that he was suffering from serious health problems by issuing a public statement, saying "I have never felt better in my life than I do at present, and I am enjoying my customary exuberant good health."<sup>193</sup> Four months later, and with typical good humour, Carr responded to further rumours, saying: "I am perfectly alright. These inquiries are like sticking pins into an effigy – they might kill me off yet." He denied he had suffered a stroke, claiming to have had merely a bout of influenza, although, he added, "these many inquiries may bring about a stroke yet."<sup>194</sup>

Despite his denials, Carr's poor health had affected his ability to do represent his electorate for at least a year before his eventual retirement in May 1962. According to some of his younger caucus colleagues, by the late 1950s, Carr was displaying "clear evidence of eccentricity and some

<sup>192</sup> *N.Z.P.D.*, Vol. 286, 18 August 1949.

<sup>193</sup> *Dominion*, 11 November 1958.

<sup>194</sup> *Evening Post*, 10 February 1959.

definite signs of senility.”<sup>195</sup> Whether senile or not, Carr’s behaviour in parliament at the end of his career was undeniably eccentric. There are many reports of Carr’s miserliness, a character trait which was not unique to his later years, and which was observed in both Timaru and Wellington. Robert Tizard remembers Carr breaching the rules of parliament by staying overnight in his parliamentary offices to save expenses. Perhaps the most well-known story about Carr is that once darned the holes in his socks during a parliamentary debate. During the 1946 election campaign, Carr referred to this incident: “I am no snob. They laughed at me when I was darning my socks in the House. Well, I had been away from home for a fortnight and my socks needed darning. There was no-one in the galleries – I forgot the glamour boys in the Press gallery.”<sup>196</sup> According to Michael Bassett, by the late 1950s, Carr ate in his parliamentary office whenever possible, generating “constant smells of burnt toast, somewhat to the irritation of colleagues.”<sup>197</sup> Tizard backs up this story, saying that Carr would go to Bellamy’s only twice a day, filling his pockets with sliced bread or scones to be toasted later in his office. Carr’s penny pinching extended to his weekend trips back to Timaru. According to Tizard, Carr struck a deal with the train guards in Christchurch, and when he got off the overnight ferry in Lyttelton, he would join them in their off-duty room. There, he would toast the bread he had taken from Bellamy’s over the coke brazier while waiting for the train south to Timaru.<sup>198</sup> According to another story, Carr used to lock himself in his office overnight. He kept an empty five pound prune tin in the office as his “relief agency”, which he would empty out the window at dawn, much to the chagrin of the staff of the parliamentary library. According to Tizard, Carr was considered “more than just eccentric” by younger Labour MPs:

Clyde was quite a raconteur, an orator rather than a debater when I knew him. With a couple of somebody else’s beers aboard, he would declaim Coleridge’s “ancient Mariner” in large chunks, especially the parts referring to the “Halbatross” as he pronounced it....He always asked to be greeted as the Rev Clyde Carr, but was not above boasting, when lubricated, of his success in sexually solacing parishioners/constituents.<sup>199</sup>

<sup>195</sup> Robert Tizard to Colin Brown, 16 February 1996.

<sup>196</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 26 November 1946.

<sup>197</sup> Michael Bassett to Colin Brown, 8 February 1996.

<sup>198</sup> Robert Tizard to Colin Brown, 16 February 1996.

<sup>199</sup> Robert Tizard to Colin Brown, 16 February 1996.

Carr's friend and associates in Timaru also remember him becoming increasingly eccentric with age. Doug Shears remembers that Carr was vice patron of the Timaru Yacht Club for many years, and often presented trophies and prizes at the end of the season. At one Yacht Club prize-giving "Clyde was quite full of liquor and started to tell a poor type of yarn. In fact he was so over the hill that the Commodore had him ejected from the social and he was not asked back again."<sup>200</sup> Frank Heveltdt, an A.S.R.S. organiser, often worked during campaigns transporting Carr around the electorate for evening addresses. He remembers once picking Carr up from his house and being surprised to see Carr come out in his slippers: "I can remember [we] had to take him back and make him put his shoes and socks on."<sup>201</sup> Other former party and union members remember eccentric aspects of Carr's behaviour, although most of the recollections collected from respondents in 1996 and 2001 necessarily date from the last decade or two of Carr's life, the effect of which may be to overstate some of Carr's eccentricities.

On 2 April 1961, Carr's wife Laurie died of breast cancer aged seventy-four. It was most probably after Laurie's death that Carr moved back to Christchurch to live with his daughter and son-in-law, as he had been living in Christchurch for around a year when he finally announced his retirement from parliament on 31 May 1962. The news of Carr's retirement was met with regret by the National Party in Timaru, who had decided that it was in their interests to keep him in parliament for as long as possible, knowing of his declining health and frequent absences from the house: "A gentle sleeper, [Carr] did little to disturb the decorum of the Assembly as he would have, had he been addicted to loud, vulgar snoring. ... It is ironic that by getting out he is doing us the most damage. It was in our interests to keep him propped up for another 12 months or more."<sup>202</sup>

Walter Nash made a rather perfunctory statement upon Carr's retirement, saying that Carr had "endeared himself to all his colleagues", complimenting Carr on his ability as a local representative and a public speaker, and noting Carr's major areas of policy interest: education, decentralisation of industry, and external affairs.<sup>203</sup> Another tribute to Carr was offered by the

<sup>200</sup> Doug Shears to Stephen Kerr, 31 March 2001.

<sup>201</sup> Frank Heveltdt to Robert Paton, 14 March 1992, Trade Union Oral History Project, OH Int 0056/33, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

<sup>202</sup> Timaru National Party Minute Books, 30 April 1962.

<sup>203</sup> *Dominion*, 7 June 1962.



parliamentary reporter from the *Dominion*, who described Carr as “one of the most eloquent members the House has known, describing his “tremendous command of the English language” and his fondness for injecting into his speeches “some tongue-twisters or little-known or used word that later sent many of his fellows to the General Assembly Library to consult the Greater Oxford.” The article also made mention of Carr’s constituency work, claiming that he “always acknowledged and immediately took up any questions asked him by constituents irrespective of party.”<sup>204</sup> The by-election for the Timaru seat was held in July, and was easily won by a thirty-three year old Timaru-born petrol tanker driver from Temuka called Basil Arthur. Arthur’s winning margin of 1307 was far in excess of Carr’s result in 1960, and Arthur went on to hold the seat for twenty-five years until his defeat in 1987.

Less than four months after his retirement, Carr died of a heart attack on 18 September 1962, aged seventy-six. Predictably, Carr’s obituaries emphasised his “unremitting... attention to the needs of constituents and to the electorate.”<sup>205</sup> The *Timaru Herald* described him as a “man of considerable intellectual attainments” and an “astute campaigner”, and claimed that his “unswerving pursuit of his beliefs and his assiduous service undoubtedly had a deep influence on the political thinking of the people and in shaping the future of the district.”<sup>206</sup> The Labour mayor of Timaru, Muriel Hilton, quoted Socrates to sum up what she saw as Carr’s personal philosophy: “I pray the men of the future may live life more nobly than we live it; I pray that all injustice and greed and all littleness of soul may perish from the nature of man.”<sup>207</sup> Long-serving Timaru L.R.C. chair G.S. Ray described Carr as

a very exacting member, who gave tremendous attention to detail, he fought strongly for the benefit of the individual and the community. No task was too small, and none too large, and he never turned down any reasonable request.... He was a gifted speaker and a learned man, but perhaps one of his greatest attributes was that he never lost touch with the common man.”<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> *ibid.*, 1 June 1962.

<sup>205</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 19 September 1962.

<sup>206</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>207</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>208</sup> *ibid.*

Carr's funeral was held in Christchurch on September 21 during light drizzle. Rev R.P. Andrews described Carr as having been well-loved for his "cheerful friendliness and his integrity." Among the hundred or so mourners were MPs Brain Talboys, Arnold Nordmeyer, Norman Kirk, Michael Connolly, Herbert Walker, Herbert Pickering, and Basil Arthur. The mayors and town clerks of Timaru and Christchurch were also present. An impression of the widespread impact Carr had made in Timaru can be gained from the list of organisations in Timaru which sent floral tributes to Carr's funeral: the Harbour Board, Labour Party branches, yacht club, Country Drivers' Union, the Chinese Association, staff of Lincoln College, and the Woollen Workers' Union.<sup>209</sup> Further tribute was paid to Carr seven years after his death with the construction of the Clyde Carr Memorial Hall on North Street by the Trades Hall Society in June 1969.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> *ibid.*, 22 September 1962.

<sup>210</sup> *ibid.*, 14 June 1969.

## 6. Conclusion: Clyde Carr, Timaru and the art of incumbency

I'd rather be a rebel, and dubbed a heretic  
 Than a whining, wheedling sycophant, with someone's boots to lick.  
 A short life and a merry one I'd chose with noble rage  
 Far rather than to linger out my hours upon the stage.  
 I'd rather be a sinner with a sinner's joys and woes  
 Than a grave and reverend seigneur with a proud, averted nose.  
 Better be young and naughty at three-score-years-and-ten,  
 Than a deathshroud cold and haughty at the feast of merry men.  
 - Clyde Carr, "Testament".<sup>1</sup>

The aim of this thesis has been to investigate Carr's incumbency in Timaru. Two quite different modes of explanation have been adopted. Chapter three demonstrated that there was a strong structural basis for Labour voting in Timaru. Throughout Carr's career in Timaru, union membership in Timaru per head of voting population remained high relative to other provincial town electorates. Unions remained central to the political labour movement in the electorate, numerically and financially dominating the Timaru L.R.C. and filling key positions of responsibility within it. The strength of unionisation in Timaru is key to understanding Carr's success, as it explains the source of mass support for the Labour Party and reflects the largely urban nature of the electorate. It is also possible that the legacy of patterns of settlement in South Canterbury had a role to play in the development of labour consciousness in Timaru. Timaru was one of the slowest growing of the ten provincial towns, and showed a high level of residential segregation in its voting patterns. These factors appear to have either increased support for Labour, or inhibited the electoral success of the National Party, or both.

However, while this demographic context was a necessary condition for Carr's success, structural factors are not in themselves sufficient for explaining Carr's incumbency. There are a number of

reasons for this. Firstly, of the ten provincial town seats, Timaru did not consistently have the highest Labour vote. On average across the period, the Labour vote in Napier and Wanganui was higher than it was in Timaru. However, the vote in these towns occasionally swung to the right far enough to let National win. Only in Timaru did Labour consistently win the seat. Or, to put it another way, only in Timaru did Labour consistently *not lose* the seat. The “incumbency advantage” seems to have worked for Carr not by allowing him to build his majority to a massive size, but by consistently preventing enough voters from swinging away from Labour for him to hold the seat. Despite several close calls, Carr won and held the seat through eleven election campaigns.

There is another reason that any explanation of Carr’s success must account for his conscious behaviour as a politician, as well as the structural nature of his electorate. There is evidence that Carr’s appeal to electors stretched beyond the traditional Labour constituency of urban workers. At various times in his career, Carr could claim the support of groups like retired farmers and the chamber of commerce, groups which would normally be expected to support the National Party. Thus, the strength of Carr’s personal appeal was a crucial aspect of his political success, and one which cannot be explained with reference to the demographic characteristics of Timaru. Only through a close description of Carr’s style as a local representative can his ability to appeal to such a wide range of voters be understood.

The present chapter proceeds by reviewing the political science literature on incumbency in order to identify the factors which create the “incumbency advantage” for a candidate seeking reelection. The literature survey briefly discusses the relevance of the various factors to Carr’s case, and is meant to provide a theoretical context for Carr’s achievement. Finally, the last section describes the six themes which characterised Carr’s distinctive political style: constituency work, communication, campaign technique, common touch, controversy and chance. The themes give coherence to Carr’s diverse interests, and help to explain his success in Timaru.

### **The Incumbency Advantage**

Most investigations into incumbency in the political science literature are based on interviews with either contemporary voters or representatives or both. Through a precise statistical analysis of the

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<sup>1</sup> Carr, *Poems*, p. 22.

results, investigators attempt to identify how much the incumbent politician's success is the product of their position as incumbent, as distinct from other factors such as national voting swings, the historical partisanship of the electorate, the demographic characteristics of the electorate, and so on. While it is impossible to recreate such interview-based research in a historical study such as the present thesis, insights from contemporary political science research provide useful starting points for understanding to what extent Carr's behaviour contributed to his incumbency.

Factors that affect the strength of the incumbency advantage for a candidate fall into two groups. The first are internal factors, factors over which the politician has conscious control. Such factors usually relate to campaign style and constituency work. Secondly, there are external factors, factors over which the politician has no control, and of which they may not be conscious. External factors include the social and demographic profile of the electorate. Some American studies have found that an MP's political style is a weaker factor in explaining their incumbency than the structural nature of their electorate. However, in Westminster-style democracies, constituency work has been found to play a much more significant role in securing a candidate's reelection.<sup>2</sup> Ironically, party discipline in the New Zealand parliament is the strongest of any Western democracy, and therefore the potential for activity by individual New Zealand MPs on behalf of their constituents may be expected to be constrained by the demands of the party. Anagnoson notes the paradox between the expectation of high levels of constituency work by New Zealand MPs and the strength of party discipline in the country: "How members manage both the constraints of their small, personalized electorates and those of a strong party is by no means obvious."<sup>3</sup> In any case, most studies on incumbency in Westminster democracies have focused on internal factors, especially the role of constituency casework, as a factor in incumbents' reelection. Constituency casework is a highly visible and readily quantifiable factor over which the member has conscious control, and has long been regarded anecdotally as an effective means of increasing a member's majority.

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<sup>2</sup> John Johannes and John McAdams, "The Congressional Incumbency Effect: Is it Casework, Policy Compatibility or Something Else? An Examination of the 1978 Election," *American Journal of Political Science* 25, no. 3 (1981), p. 537; Dianna Yiannakis, "The Grateful Electorate: Casework and Congressional Elections," *American Journal of Political Science* 25, no. 3 (1981), p. 577.

<sup>3</sup> Theodore Anagnoson, "Home Style in New Zealand," *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 8, no. 2 (1983), p. 158.

The most important external factors regarding Carr's career have been discussed in chapter three. The high level of unionisation in Timaru was crucial to Carr's success, and the slow rate of population growth and relatively high level of residential segregation were also significant. Another factor that was external to Carr's control, but which certainly affected by Carr's success, was the inability of the National Party in Timaru to maximise their effectiveness. Their continual lack of success meant that fund raising and maintaining enthusiasm for the next campaign became increasingly difficult. Attracting high quality candidates from outside the area was also difficult, given the electorate's poor record of success for National. Of the eleven candidates Carr faced, many were of a poor standard, and failed to relate to the electors as effectively as Carr.

The key internal factors affecting incumbency identified in the literature are: constituency work; aligning policy advocacy to match the preferences of electors; attracting central government funding for the electorate; influence over governmental policy, and gaining publicity, usually press coverage, for all the above activities.<sup>4</sup> Constituency work, particularly assisting constituents in their dealings with government agencies (the "welfare office" role), has become a very important part of the MP's responsibilities as the state has taken an increasingly active role in the social and economic affairs of its citizens.<sup>5</sup> Wider access to higher education and the increasing penetration of media into society have also worked to increase the likelihood of constituents seeking help from their local MP. Another factor which influences the amount of casework done by MPs is the marginality of the electorate: the more marginal the electorate, the more casework an MP may feel obliged to perform in order to hold the seat. Only in the very safest seats do MPs relax their constituency work.<sup>6</sup> Also, urban and poor electorates tend to produce more casework for their MPs than wealthy and rural electorates.<sup>7</sup> However, most authors have found that the single most important determinant of the amount of casework performed is the personal preference of the MP.<sup>8</sup> All of these factors, the marginality and urban nature of the electorate, and Carr's personal preference for performing casework, were present in Timaru.

<sup>4</sup> McAdams, "Congressional Incumbency Effect," p. 513; Yiannakis, "Grateful Electorate," p. 572.

<sup>5</sup> Anthony Barker and Michael Rush, *The Member of Parliament and His Information* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1970), p. 197; Adrienne von Tunzelmann, "Membership of the New Zealand Parliament: A Study of Conditions, 1854-1978" (Master of Public Policy, Victoria University of Wellington, 1979), p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> Theodore Anagnoson, "Does Constituency Work have an Electoral Impact? The Case of New Zealand MPs," *Political Science* 39, no. 2 (1987), p. 116.

<sup>7</sup> Anagnoson, "Home Style," p. 171.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, p. 162; Yiannakis, "Grateful Electorate," p. 575.

The other factors listed above are less powerful in explaining incumbency, and less relevant to Carr's career. Policy matching, for example, is a weak explanation for the incumbency advantage. The challenger is equally as able as the incumbent to adjust her or his policy position according to what they perceive as the preference of the majority of their electors. In any case, not all constituents have the same policy preferences, so policy matching *per se* is unlikely to be a useful technique. The argument that winning central government funding for the electorate acts to increase the likelihood of an incumbent's reelection is more convincing. Being able to take credit for central government funding to local projects is a major advantage that the incumbent has over a challenger. However, this responsibility is a double-edged sword, and the incumbent may also be exposed to potential criticism when the electors perceive that they have not done enough on behalf of the electors. This was certainly true of Carr, who, for example, spent over thirty years explaining to his electors why a new police station had not been built in Timaru.

Another advantage identified in the literature that the incumbent has over the challenger is a governmental influence. At any election, the incumbent MP has had at least one term in which to secure advantages for her or his electorate. However, in the case of Carr's career, two factors count against governmental influence as an important factor in explaining his incumbency. Firstly, Carr's influence within the Labour Party was marginal. He never attained cabinet rank, and was as often as not out of favour with his party hierarchy. Secondly, on three occasions Carr's opponent was a sitting government MP, and in these cases both the incumbent and the challenger would have had equal claim to government influence.

Public "credit taking" is a crucial adjunct to all the above strategies. Once again, the incumbent has a significant advantage when it comes to attracting media attention for activities. Carr's often controversial political style assured he had a regular presence in the *Timaru Herald*. However, the consistent and explicit opposition to Carr by the newspaper certainly reduced the extent to which he could expect *sympathetic* press coverage of his activities. High visibility is not the only advantage that the incumbent MP has over the opponent when seeking reelection. Most sitting MPs have access to certain "prerequisites of office" such as travel, phone and mail perks. However, the perks and salary available to MPs in New Zealand in Carr's period were modest to say the least. MPs in New Zealand were entitled to a tax-free allowance to meet expenses such as travel and accommodation only after 1944. Parliament offered no secretarial, administrative,

research or other support to MPs.<sup>9</sup> In fact, far from being advantageous to Carr, the demands of office (especially travelling between Wellington and Timaru and living away from home) must have been extremely exhausting.

Constituency work is the factor identified in the literature with the most relevance to Carr's incumbency. Thus, it is the first of the six themes of his career and political style which are described below.

## **Carr's Political Style**

### **1. Constituency Work**

Carr's work on behalf of his constituents was one of the most visible aspects of his career, and a decisive factor in his ongoing success. Throughout his career, he went to great lengths to promote the interests of his electorate and electors in parliament. While Carr's personality and political style may have endeared him to voters, it was his advocacy on behalf of his electors that provided the substantive basis for the electorate's support for him. Carr was more aware of this than anyone, and at every election he emphasised in his publicity his diligent service to both individual electors and the electorate as a whole. The fact that Carr went to great lengths to foster his reputation as constituency MP certainly suggests he was aware of the importance of such a reputation to his electoral success. Perhaps Carr also saw the opportunity to do constituency work as a means of attracting the crucial extra support he needed to assure the safety of his seat. There were four aspects to Carr's role as a constituency MP: his representations on behalf of individuals in their dealings with government agencies; his efforts to secure central government funding for local amenities like the port, airport and police station; his choice of policy advocacy that was meant to bring general benefits to secondary towns and/or the South Island; and his ability to maintain close relationships with the Labour Party branches and unions within the Timaru L.R.C.

Carr continuously brought the ideas of his electors to the attention of parliament, whether they were criticisms of government regulations, ideas for the development of new industries or any other comments on the affairs of Timaru and New Zealand. This suggests that Carr was in close communication with his electors, that he listened to what they had to say and that he treated his role as their representative seriously enough to suggest their ideas to the house. Carr saw himself

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<sup>9</sup> Tunzelmann, "New Zealand Parliament : A Study of Conditions", pp. 110-113.



as an agent of democracy, creating a means of access for all people within his electorate to reach the lawmakers in Wellington. Carr assisted individuals in his electorate in more practical ways also. In the post-war period he made so many representations to the Department of Social Security on behalf of his electors that a special file series was created by department staff to deal with his correspondence.<sup>10</sup> Carr also presented a number of petitions to parliament on behalf of his electors, and made representations to parliament on the conditions of groups such as relief workers, small farmers, fishermen, and soldiers. Carr's experience and training as a minister of religion - specifically his communication skills, his ability to listen to constituents' requests and complaints, and his experience in managing a parish or constituency - would have helped him in his role as a local MP.

The other activity that is commonly associated with an MP's constituency role is attracting funding for amenities within the electorate. Carr went to a great deal of effort arguing for the development of Timaru's port, airport, radio station, police station and so on. He constantly struggled to attract new industry to the electorate; lobbied for the continued protection of the wheat industry so vital to the South Canterbury economy; demanded progress on the construction of housing in Timaru; and promoted the town as a holiday destination in an effort to increase levels of domestic tourism.

In general, though, Carr's efforts in lobbying for local amenities were probably less effective in increasing his vote than the individual representations and assistance he gave. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, in contrast to individual representations, the process of lobbying for local amenities was slow and unpredictable. Carr spent a great deal of energy lobbying for legislative change or funding to local projects, only to see his efforts come to nothing. For example, Carr's continual efforts to attract industry to Timaru met with relatively little success, and his struggle to have a new police station built took thirty years to come to fruition. This can hardly have helped convince voters that Carr's services were invaluable to the electorate. Secondly, even if such lobbying was successful, the benefits were sometimes so non-specific or indirect, that they would go unnoticed by many electors. The assistance that Carr gave on behalf of individuals, on the other hand, would usually have a far more direct and focused effect and a far more explicit electoral benefit for him. Thirdly, it not always cut-and-dried as to who would receive the benefits from

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<sup>10</sup> SS 7/7/2/19, Pt. 1, National Archives, Wellington.

local amenities. Rather than unite the public, issues of local development sometimes divided the electorate. A good example of a local issue which divided the community was the issue of the alienation of part of Timaru Park for use by the hospital. Lastly, some local policy issues (such as the need to attract industry to the electorate or to protect the wheat industry) were too widely agreed upon to be politically cogent in an election campaign. They were invariably part of the policy platforms of Carr's opponents as well as his own.

Much of Carr's policy advocacy was meant to bring benefits not only to Timaru, but to the entire South Island, or to all secondary centres. Carr probably realised that his efforts were more likely to be successful if they encompassed a greater proportion of the country than his own electorate. The best example of this was Carr's desire for the decentralisation of industry and population away from the main centres. Carr emphasised the nationwide benefits of decentralisation, only occasionally mentioning the potential for direct benefits to Timaru.

The last and least visible aspect of Carr's constituency role was to maintain close and amicable relations with his local party and the union movement. Without the support of the local organisation and the unions, Carr would not have been able to run effective campaigns. Although his relationship with the party was sometimes stormy, on only three occasions (1928, 1941 and 1949) was his candidacy challenged. The Labour Party's candidate selection procedure favours the incumbent MP more than the National Party's, because the party executive, not the local branches, make the selection. Generally, the party hierarchy is more likely to want to hold on to a successful member, and not risk a change of candidate, regardless of local party considerations.<sup>11</sup> Barker and Rush cite the example of two MPs who found that the voter credit they gained through "welfare officer" work enabled them to hold on to power in their electorate despite a nationwide swing against their party. They also argue this credit is helpful for the MP in disputes with the local party, which suggests that such credit is "owned" by the member, rather than the party.<sup>12</sup> Thus, Carr's incumbency meant that his renomination for the candidacy in Timaru was more or less a formality, even as he entered his seventies.

Carr had a close relationship with the union movement in Timaru. In September 1954, Carr's twenty-five years of service as MP were celebrated at a presentation social at Strathallan Hall. The

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<sup>11</sup> Keith Jackson, "Stability and Renewal : Incumbency and Parliamentary Composition," in *The Victorious Incumbent : A Threat to Democracy?*, ed. Andrea Rommele (Aldershot: Dartmouth Publishing, 1994), p. 269.

<sup>12</sup> Barker and Rush, *Information*, p. 177.

function was crowded with members of the Watersiders' Union, their wives and families. Both the vice president and president of the union made speeches praising Carr's constant attention to the needs of the electorate.<sup>13</sup> Union support, while essential to Carr and Labour's survival, did have one electoral disadvantage: the idea that trade unions had undue and undemocratic control over the Labour Party's policy and activities became a constant theme of National's attacks during campaigns.

Whatever his methods, Carr managed to win the support of a diverse range of groups within the community. At one point, Carr claimed to have the support of at least part of the farming community in his electorate: "I am saying nothing against retired farmers, for I have every reason to believe – it could not be otherwise – that a large number of retired farmers in Timaru support me and I could not get into Parliament without them; there are such a lot of them."<sup>14</sup> Later, during the 1954 campaign, Carr thanked the Chamber of Commerce for their support. Support of this kind cannot be explained with reference to party politics, or to Carr's idiosyncratic political agenda, but was rather the result of his activity on behalf of his electors and his personal charisma. Constituency work was the most important mechanism by which Carr was able to build upon the base of support for Labour within Timaru, and establish a personal appeal strong enough to ensure that the seat never slipped out of his grasp. Other themes in Carr's career, mentioned below, most importantly his communication skills and "common touch" were significant in that they enhanced his ability to perform constituency work effectively. And because he could perform constituency work so effectively, Carr could count among his supporters members from all sectors of community. The nature of some electors' support for Carr went beyond a political level, too. For many in Timaru, Carr was remembered as much as a friend and personal advocate as a political representative.

## 2. Communication Skills

Perhaps above all, Carr was a communicator. Aside from its central importance to his work as an MP, Carr's skill as a speaker and writer were defining features of his pre-parliamentary career. Carr remained a lover and writer of poetry his whole life, and worked at various times as a writer, a radio presenter, a minister and an editor. Many obituary tributes to him commented on the

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<sup>13</sup> *N.Z. Worker*, 29 September 1954.

<sup>14</sup> *N.Z.P.D.*, Vol. 286. 12 August 1949.

verbosity and obscure vocabulary he employed in his parliamentary speeches. Carr's speaking was not necessarily characterised by highbrow language, however. He was equally at home addressing a group of relief workers in a remote camp as addressing parliament. He had the rare ability to address all kinds of people on their own terms. Furthermore, Carr was often funny in his campaign speeches, in stark contrast to his opponents.

Rather than decrease in importance as campaigning changed and meetings became less important, Carr's natural wit and turn of phrase became even more valuable. As attendance at campaign meetings dropped away to almost nothing and political meetings became in effect public press conferences, Carr's statements, whether dryly amusing or shockingly radical, ensured he stayed in the public eye.

Carr's ability to communicate clearly and entertainingly defined his campaign technique and his image as a politician who was in touch with the common people. Carr's appeal was based on his effective self-portrayal as a "man of the people" in terms of his manner of speech, opinions and preferences. He could be by turns funny, irreverent, eloquent, erudite, pious, vulgar, radical and inspirational.

### 3. Campaign Technique

Carr's efforts in 1928 established a pattern for well-executed campaigns. Almost without exception, Carr held more meetings on a greater number of campaign days than his opponents. Furthermore, Carr had the financial and practical support of both the local Labour Party branches and the extensive union networks in the electorate. Early in his career, Carr was a highly energetic and innovative campaigner, a gifted and entertaining speaker who was prepared to go to great lengths to reach disadvantaged voters who had been ignored by other politicians. In his first campaign, Carr spoke at a range of locations, including the Young Peoples' Social Club, the Old Mens' Home, and the relief workers' camp at Cave. Carr also held large evening outdoor meetings in the evening in the centre of town as a means of reaching large numbers of urban workers.

As the nature of campaigning and the context of his candidacy changed, Carr's adapted his campaign style. By the 1950s, Carr was an established incumbent and long-serving MP, and the importance of campaign meetings had become almost entirely symbolic. With his communication skills, experience in broadcast media and distinctive manner, Carr was an ideal candidate for the emerging age of mediated politics. Carr ensured he received a high degree of press coverage by

making the most of his ability to deliver pithy one-liners and making public appearances in his capacity as local MP. During the 1954 campaign, for example, Carr appeared in the *Timaru Herald* at the openings of a couple of local facilities, and began to cast himself as something of an elder statesman. Carr's relationship with the local newspapers was fraught at best, the *Timaru Herald* explicitly opposing him in its editorials at all eleven elections. Nevertheless, receiving press coverage was an essential aspect of Carr's campaigning, and he managed to achieve this through the strength of his charisma and the benefits of public office.

Crucial to Carr's success was the campaign assistance offered by the local party and affiliated unions in Timaru. Local party officials took responsibility for campaign assistance, such as canvassing electors, raising campaign funds, and transporting voters to the polls on election day. In his study of the 1960 general election, Robert Chapman found that the effectiveness of local party organisation influenced local election results, especially where the seat was marginal.<sup>15</sup> Carr's experience in Timaru also suggests that the levels of organisation of the different parties could be decisive. The lack of motivation and disorganisation on the part of the National Party was probably as important to Carr's continued success as the effectiveness of Labour.

Carr's campaign style was the product of the other aspects of his career listed here. It was an idiosyncratic and dynamic style based upon his "common touch", his abilities as a communicator, and his penchant for controversy of one kind or another, with a strong emphasis on his constituency work. Carr's inventiveness and adaptability as a campaigner was crucial to his ongoing success. After an especially strong initial three campaigns, Carr was established in the seat. He could not relax however, as successive developments in politics (the rise of the D.S.L.P., the electoral decline of Labour) demanded that he continue to campaign effectively and alter his style to suit the changing nature of political campaigning.

#### 4. Common Touch

Carr's objection to what he saw as "snobbery" was central to his identity. It informed his policy advocacy, his campaigning, his economic philosophy, his constituency work, and his writing and speechmaking alike. Carr's "common touch" manifested itself in two ways. Firstly, a deep-seated economic and philosophical egalitarianism was central to much of Carr's political activity: his support for Labour's social security programmes; his attacks on the privileged classes, large banks,

oil companies, stock and station agents and so on; and his concern with social justice and the plight of the disadvantaged, for example the mentally ill, relief workers, prison inmates, the Samoan independence movement, and juvenile delinquents.

The second dimension to Carr's common touch was not so much a conscious political stance as a personality trait. Carr's manner was such that he appealed naturally to ordinary men and women. In his speech, behaviour and preferences, Carr did not in any way try to distinguish himself from the people of Timaru. Early in his career, Carr made a name for himself mixing easily with his audiences, often reciting poetry, entertaining and even singing at campaign meetings. His decision to enlist as a private in the army was widely seen as a willingness to "muck in" and do his bit for the war effort. Even in his sixties, Carr was a regular at Saturday night dances in Timaru. Carr advocated a colloquial, populist style of radio where modern music and language would be the norm. If anything, Carr's views on social and moral issues like marriage, language, capital punishment, and liquor licensing were sometimes too progressive for many of his constituents. By contrast, National candidates were often dour and moralistic. Interestingly, Carr would sometimes emphasise his own irreverent attitude towards symbols of authority (for example the royal family, or the Labour Party leadership), apparently as a means of aligning himself with his everyday electors.

A colourful example of Carr's willingness to mix with his constituents on their own terms came in August 1951. As Prime Minister Holland addressed electors at the Theatre Royal, Carr attended a New Zealand Workers' Union Monster Shearer's Jamboree held in a shearing shed, where there were "sheep shearers actually on the job" and where "ducks and other wildfowl shared the dance floor with a record number of couples for Timaru." Carr's official duties took place "during the night or early in the morning", when he presented a suitcase, hairbrush and wallet as a gesture of appreciation to Bill Dempster, a local N.Z.W.U. organiser.<sup>16</sup> Carr's warmth, humour and humility were the heart of his appeal to the electorate. He did not pretend to be any better or more deserving than any of his neighbours, and loved nothing more than to ridicule those who considered themselves superior. Importantly, he put this philosophical belief in an egalitarian society into practical action, for example through his activity on behalf of his constituents seeking help with government agencies.

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<sup>15</sup> Chapman, Jackson, and Mitchell, *Politics in Action*, p. 152.

## 5. Controversy

One way or another, Carr often attached himself to controversy over the course of his career. He was attracted to radical political causes, and was unafraid to voice his support for them. Carr's close association with Lee, combined with his outspoken support for Social Credit monetary reform, kept him out of favour with the Labour Party leadership and limited his personal progress through the party. Carr's controversial pronouncements on the desirability of closer relations with the U.S.S.R. during the Cold War and advocacy for a more liberal attitude towards alcohol licensing earned him the disapproval of Fraser, as did the persistent rumours about Carr's infidelities.

Given that there is a perception of Timaru as a fairly socially conservative electorate,<sup>17</sup> Carr's willingness to embroil himself in controversy over both radical political causes and social and moral issues is one of the most puzzling aspects of his career. Two points need to be made about this aspect of Carr's life. Firstly, the controversial nature of Carr's career was not always deliberate. Carr was a passionate politician and a fairly eccentric man, and a certain amount of controversy was probably inevitable once he had entered public life.<sup>18</sup> Secondly, it must be remembered that for many electors, far from being a turn-off, Carr's personality and character quirks were an important part of his appeal. Whether consciously or not, many of Carr's political stances were in opposition to dominant conservative institutional values, for example his insistence on secular education, his opposition to jingoism during World War Two, his irreverence towards the royal family, and his anti-imperialism.

In both his policy advocacy and his personal behaviour, Carr participated in, or at least tolerated, activities that were part of many of his electors' everyday lives, but which were considered "moral issues" in the political realm. Such activities included drinking, dancing, smoking, gambling and marital infidelity. As much as Carr's attitude to these issues caused offence among certain groups in Timaru, many other voters would not have taken offence, and may have even applauded Carr's frankness. It was credit to Carr's political skill and/or good fortune that he was able to judge the climate of popular opinion accurately enough that he never lost the seat. (Although he came close

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<sup>16</sup> *N.Z. Worker*, 28 August 1951.

<sup>17</sup> Oliver Gavigan to Robert Paton, 15 March 1992, Trade Union Oral History Project, OH Int 0056/19, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

<sup>18</sup> Eccentricity certainly helps account for some of the attention Carr's views attracted. In 1935 during a discussion on international security, Carr illustrated a point by saying, "Someone once asked me, 'What

on occasion, for example in the wake of the Lee affair, when by 1946 he had lost a significant proportion of his support in Timaru.) Carr certainly used his status as an ex-clergyman as a means of reinforcing his own respectability when necessary, by insisting on being referred to as "Reverend" in parliament, and peppering his speechmaking with biblical quotations and references to his church days. On occasion, Carr was called upon to defend his record as a minister, and explain his premature departure from both the Methodist and Congregationalist Churches.<sup>19</sup>

Finally, whether the majority of the voting public approved or disapproved of specific aspects of his behaviour and beliefs, Carr's outspokenness and radicalism insured that he remained in the public eye. For better or for worse, Carr was able to avoid the greatest political crime that a long-term incumbent can commit: invisibility.

## 6. Chance

The last theme of Carr's political career was not one of his own making, but played a significant role in his career nonetheless. This was the role of chance or, more specifically, the role of factors outside Carr's conscious control. Carr was undoubtedly helped by a run of fortunate circumstances at fortunate times. In 1931, Carr was lucky to face a split anti-Labour vote, without which he probably would not have won the seat. The triangular contest at the 1931 election may be seen not so much as random chance, but as the manifestation of a constant theme during Carr's career: the poor organisation of conservative political interests in Timaru.

Later instances of Carr's good fortune were more the product of pure chance, but were less decisive in determining the outcome of elections. In 1951, at the nadir of Labour's popularity, Carr faced a strong candidate in Richards, the sitting mayor. However, Richards fell ill for most of the campaign period, giving Carr a great advantage in an election he may otherwise have struggled to win. For the period between 1946 and 1954, when support for Labour nationally was low, and his majorities were at their most slim, Carr's cause was assisted to some degree by electoral boundary changes. Several of the small but strongly National-voting rural booths in the Timaru electorate were absorbed into the surrounding Waimate electorate. On balance, these changes worked in Carr's favour, although only by approximately one hundred votes.

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would you do if Hitler came to New Zealand", and my reply was, 'I would invite him home for tea.'" *N.Z.P.D.*, Vol. 245, 15 May 1936.



After briefly surveying those factors identified in the literature as affecting an incumbent MP's chances of reelection, it appears that consistency work was the most relevant to Carr's career in Timaru. It was certainly an central aspect of Carr's political style. It was not the only aspect of his style, however. Carr's interests and activities were extremely diverse, and his behaviour did not always suggest a man who was trying consciously to modify his behaviour to attract the votes of the entire electorate. However, when examined in turn, the many dimensions to Carr's life and work seem to cohere ideologically. Together they informed his idiosyncratic style.

It is very difficult to offer a brief but comprehensive explanation of Carr's incumbency in Timaru. Nevertheless, a number of factors were crucial to his success. Timaru was a largely urban electorate with a number of large unionised workplaces and a history of Liberal voting. Carr's personal and political style gave him a strong appeal to the many urban workers there. He was a gifted speaker and opposed what he saw as the "snobbery" of the wealthy and upper class. His long record of diligent service to the electorate meant that his appeal went beyond the traditional Labour constituency to reach enough voters outside these groups to assure his continued success. Through a mix of good fortune and a thorough understanding of the preferences of his electors, Carr was able to retain the Timaru seat for thirty-four years, despite sometimes having a perilously low majority. While Carr's impact on national politics was modest to the point of being negligible, his idiosyncrasy and wide range of interests and activities certainly make him one of the more interesting characters in New Zealand's political history.

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<sup>19</sup> For example *ibid.*, Vol. 283, 13 October 1948.

## Acknowledgements

Thanks to my supervisor Miles Fairburn, and to Colin Brown for lending me the research material he collected for his *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* entry on Carr. Thanks also to everyone who responded to Colin Brown's and my own requests for information on Carr. Rae Carr, Michael Bassett, Robert Tizard, Keith Jackson, Melanie Nolan and Barry Gustafson also helped during my research. Thanks to the rest of the Marsden group: Chris, Linda, Steve, John, Michael, Lydia, and Seren.

Thanks to staff the following libraries and organisations: Alexander Turnbull Library; David Verran at Auckland Public Library; Garry Jeffrey at the Canterbury Museum Documentary Research Centre; Canterbury University Library; Canterbury Public Library; Hocken Library; Macmillan Brown Library; General Assembly Library; Marcia Baker at the Methodist Church Connexional Archives; National Archives; National Library; Sound Archives; *The Press*; Heather Barker at the *Timaru Herald*; Linda Hughes at the Timaru District Library; Philip Howe at the South Canterbury Museum; Jamie Mackay at the Ministry of Culture and Heritage; and Murdo MacMillan at the New Zealand Labour Party head office.

Lastly, thanks to my family, Jayne, Renwick, and all the rest of my friends in Christchurch, Wellington and elsewhere.

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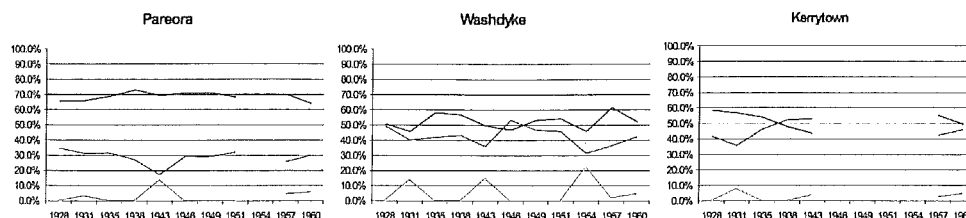
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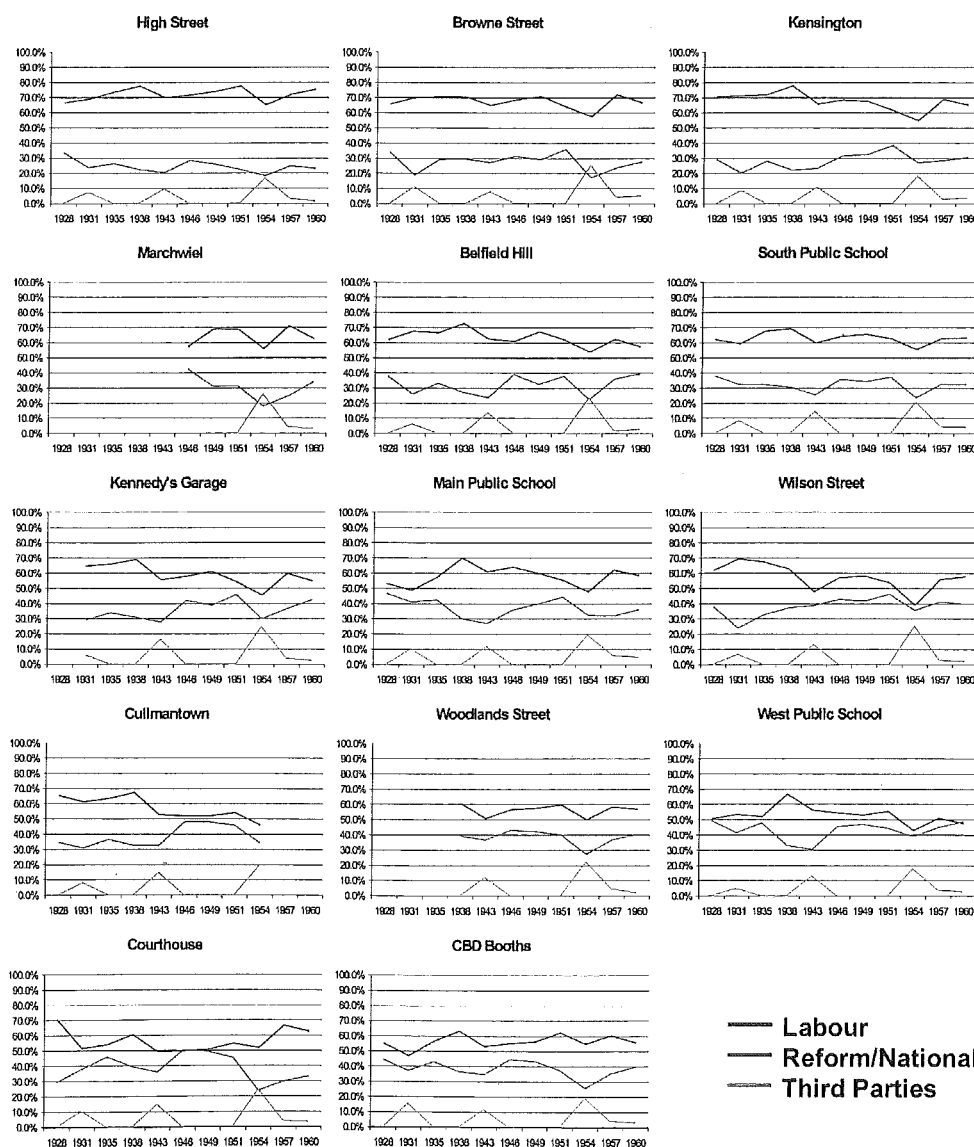


## Appendix One: Party vote in thirty-one polling booths in Timaru electorate 1928-1960

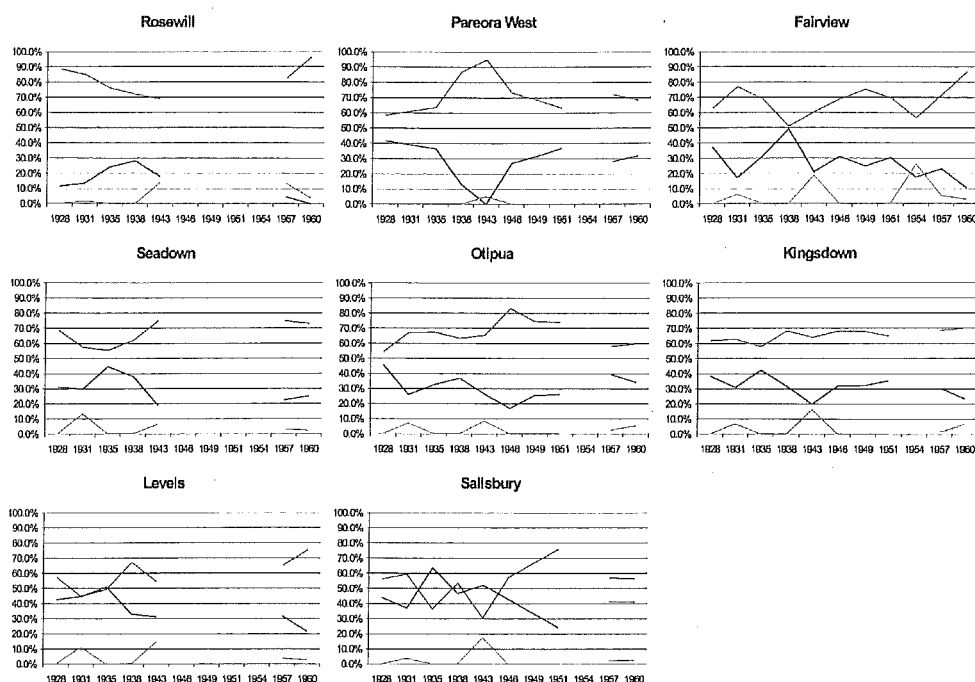
### Labour voting rural booths



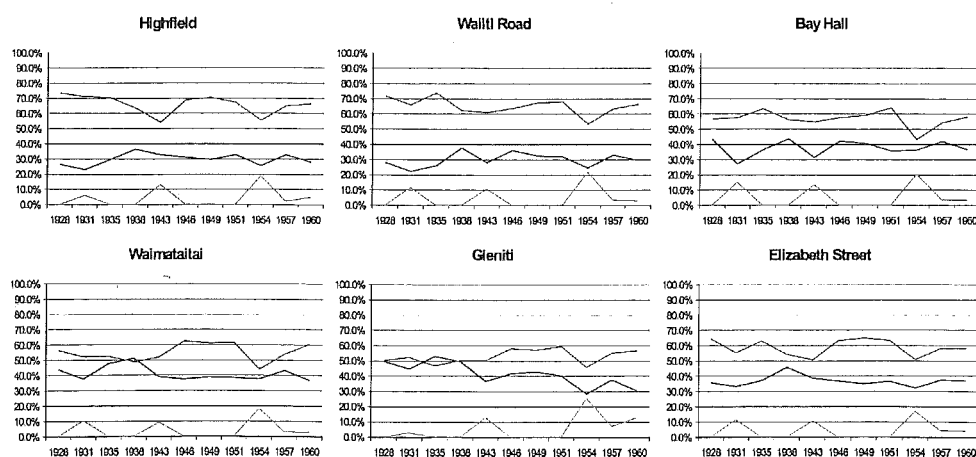
### Labour voting suburban booths



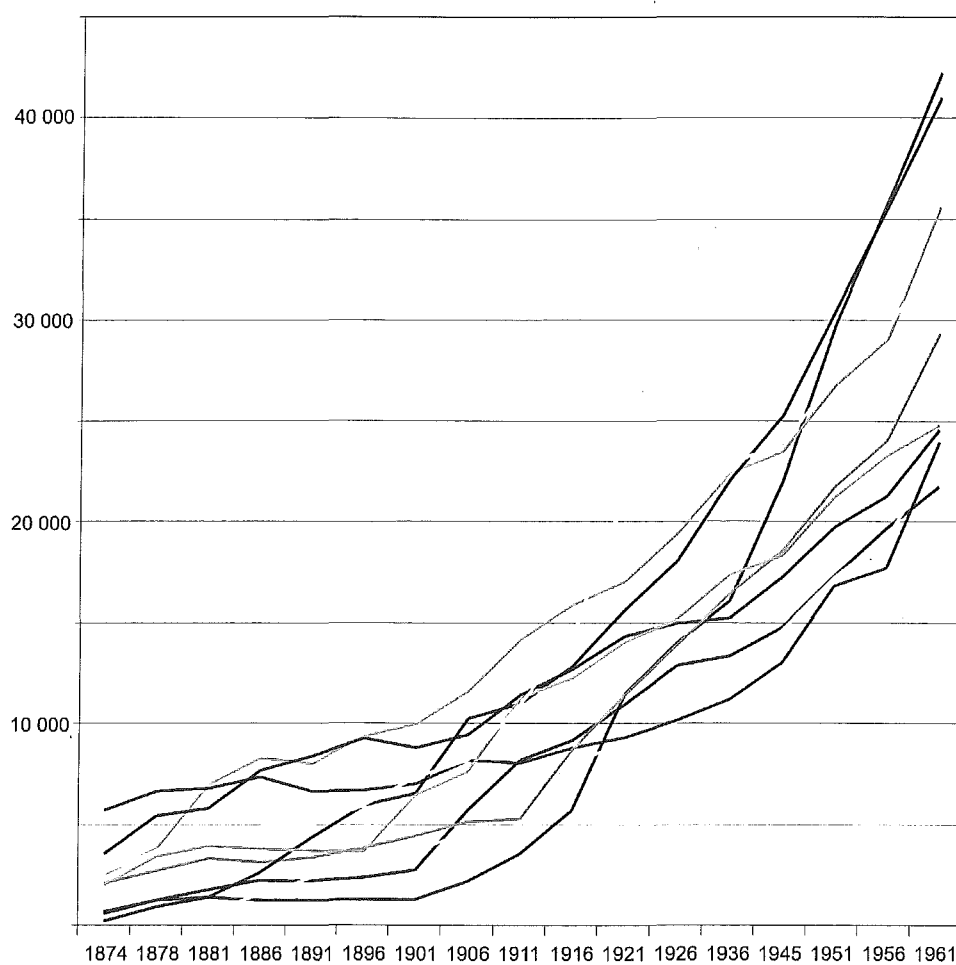
## National voting rural booths



## National voting suburban booths



## Appendix Two: Population growth in ten provincial towns 1874-1961



- Gisborne
- Hamilton
- Hastings
- Invercargill
- Napier
- Nelson
- New Plymouth
- Palmerston North
- Timaru
- Wanganui

## Appendix Three: Data and correlation tables for Chapter Three

Table 1: Correlation between intercensal growth and Labour's share of major party vote

			Percentage intercensal growth	Labour's share of major party vote
Spearman's rho	Percentage intercensal growth	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.514
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	46	46
	Labour's share of major party vote	Correlation Coefficient	-.514	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	46	46

\*\* Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Table 2: Correlation between level of affiliated union membership and Labour's share of the major party vote

			Affiliated union membership as % of total vote	Labour's share of major party vote
Spearman's rho	Affiliated union membership as % of total vote	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.140
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.216
		N	80	80
	Labour's share of major party vote	Correlation Coefficient	.140	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.216	.
		N	80	80

Table 3: N.Z.L.P. Branch membership as a proportion of the total vote in ten provincial town electorates 1931-1960

Electorate	1931	1935	1938	1943	1946	1949	1951	1954	1957	1960
	5.6%	4.3%	18.4%	19.8%	0.0%	24.0%	24.2%	17.3%	18.9%	14.7%
Gisborne	1.8%	3.2%	3.7%	2.5%	1.5%	2.4%	3.7%	4.1%	2.9%	2.0%
Hamilton	0.2%	0.2%	1.0%	0.9%	1.7%	2.5%	2.0%	1.0%	2.3%	2.0%
Hastings	2.6%	1.0%	4.1%	0.8%	1.8%	0.0%	2.0%	3.8%	2.6%	2.3%
Invercargill	0.2%	0.6%	2.2%	3.0%	3.4%	6.9%	4.1%	3.6%	2.3%	1.9%
Napier	1.7%	2.0%	5.4%	4.6%	2.9%	3.1%	3.8%	3.4%	2.9%	2.1%
Nelson	0.0%	0.0%	1.0%	0.7%	1.5%	5.3%	5.2%	2.2%	2.4%	0.8%
New Plymouth	0.8%	0.3%	2.5%	1.0%	1.9%	4.5%	6.3%	4.3%	4.2%	5.5%
Palmerston North	0.5%	0.2%	0.8%	1.2%	1.7%	2.1%	2.5%	3.5%	4.5%	3.5%
Timaru	0.1%	0.4%	0.9%	2.4%	2.9%	5.4%	5.1%	3.5%	1.7%	1.9%
Wanganui	1.0%	0.2%	2.9%	2.9%	2.9%	4.4%	5.4%	3.7%	2.5%	1.5%

Table 4: Correlation between level of N.Z.L.P. membership and Labour's share of the major party vote

			NZLP branch membership as % of total vote	Labour's share of major party vote
Spearman's rho	NZLP branch membership as % of total vote	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.050
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.658
		N	80	80
	Labour's share of major party vote	Correlation Coefficient	-.050	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.658	.
		N	80	80

Table 5: Proportion of total population Catholic, Church of England, Presbyterian, Methodist and Other in ten provincial town electorates 1926-1960

Town	Religious Affiliation	1926	1936	1945	1951	1956	1961
Gisborne	% Catholic	14.2%	14.7%	14.1%	13.4%	13.9%	14.0%
	% C of E	44.7%	43.7%	40.0%	41.4%	40.5%	40.1%
	% Presbyterian	22.6%	20.8%	22.5%	22.8%	21.4%	20.1%
	% Methodist	5.7%	4.4%	4.9%	4.8%	4.8%	4.6%
	% Other	12.9%	16.4%	18.5%	17.6%	19.4%	21.2%
Hamilton	% Catholic	13.3%	13.5%	13.5%	13.8%	14.3%	14.5%
	% C of E	41.3%	39.8%	35.5%	35.5%	34.9%	32.9%
	% Presbyterian	21.0%	22.1%	22.1%	22.4%	21.9%	22.9%
	% Methodist	12.1%	9.7%	10.0%	10.3%	9.1%	9.2%
	% Other	12.4%	14.9%	18.9%	18.0%	19.8%	20.5%
Hastings	% Catholic	14.8%	15.0%	15.2%	14.8%	13.7%	14.2%
	% C of E	42.7%	41.4%	39.5%	40.0%	39.3%	36.8%
	% Presbyterian	21.7%	21.6%	21.6%	22.3%	23.5%	23.9%
	% Methodist	8.1%	8.6%	6.9%	6.6%	5.3%	5.2%
	% Other	12.7%	13.5%	16.8%	16.3%	18.1%	19.8%
Invercargill	% Catholic	13.1%	13.5%	14.9%	14.9%	15.5%	15.9%
	% C of E	23.9%	23.6%	20.1%	19.0%	17.5%	16.4%
	% Presbyterian	44.5%	44.3%	42.9%	45.3%	44.7%	44.2%
	% Methodist	8.2%	7.7%	7.2%	6.8%	6.5%	6.7%
	% Other	10.3%	10.9%	15.0%	13.9%	15.8%	16.7%
Napier	% Catholic	14.6%	14.2%	14.5%	14.8%	15.7%	16.3%
	% C of E	48.2%	46.0%	41.6%	42.2%	39.9%	38.4%
	% Presbyterian	19.6%	19.1%	19.5%	19.0%	19.3%	19.0%
	% Methodist	6.1%	6.6%	7.5%	7.3%	7.0%	6.9%
	% Other	11.6%	14.2%	17.0%	16.7%	18.2%	19.4%
Nelson	% Catholic	10.1%	10.0%	10.2%	10.8%	10.8%	11.3%
	% C of E	46.5%	46.4%	42.0%	41.9%	41.5%	41.0%
	% Presbyterian	13.6%	14.5%	14.8%	16.8%	16.3%	15.9%
	% Methodist	10.5%	8.9%	9.3%	9.1%	8.5%	8.0%
	% Other	19.3%	20.2%	23.7%	21.3%	23.0%	23.8%
New Plymouth	% Catholic	10.5%	10.7%	12.5%	12.9%	12.8%	14.2%
	% C of E	49.9%	47.1%	42.1%	41.2%	40.6%	39.5%
	% Presbyterian	14.1%	16.4%	17.8%	18.9%	19.9%	19.6%
	% Methodist	14.9%	12.3%	12.3%	11.6%	10.6%	11.1%
	% Other	10.7%	13.5%	15.3%	15.4%	16.1%	15.6%
Palmerston North	% Catholic	12.5%	12.7%	12.6%	12.0%	12.9%	13.5%
	% C of E	42.5%	42.3%	40.0%	39.6%	38.5%	37.3%
	% Presbyterian	17.7%	17.4%	18.2%	20.1%	19.6%	20.2%
	% Methodist	10.9%	9.2%	8.4%	8.1%	7.6%	6.8%
	% Other	16.5%	18.3%	20.8%	20.1%	21.3%	22.2%
Timaru	% Catholic	14.0%	14.9%	15.4%	15.3%	15.7%	16.8%
	% C of E	35.1%	35.1%	31.8%	31.6%	31.0%	30.0%
	% Presbyterian	31.0%	30.6%	30.3%	30.8%	31.3%	31.7%
	% Methodist	9.9%	9.6%	9.5%	10.5%	8.3%	7.5%
	% Other	10.0%	9.8%	13.0%	11.7%	13.7%	14.1%
Wanganui	% Catholic	13.2%	14.7%	14.7%	15.3%	15.8%	16.7%
	% C of E	44.4%	42.7%	40.0%	39.5%	38.0%	36.1%
	% Presbyterian	21.0%	19.7%	20.2%	20.2%	20.1%	20.7%
	% Methodist	8.8%	8.0%	7.4%	7.4%	6.9%	6.6%
	% Other	12.6%	14.9%	17.7%	17.6%	19.3%	20.0%

Table 6: Correlation between proportion of population Catholic and Labour's share of major party vote

			% Catholic	Labour's share of major party vote
Spearman's rho	% Catholic	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.234
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.117
		N	46	46
	Labour's share of major party vote	Correlation Coefficient	.234	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.117	.
		N	46	46

Table 7: Correlation between proportion of population Church of England and Labour's share of major party vote

			% Church of England	Labour's share of major party vote
Spearman's rho	% Church of England	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.190
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.206
		N	46	46
	Labour's share of major party vote	Correlation Coefficient	.190	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.206	.
		N	46	46

Table 8: Correlation between proportion of population Presbyterian and Labour's share of major party vote

			% Presbyterian	Labour's share of major party vote
Spearman's rho	% Presbyterian	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.088
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.560
		N	46	46
	Labour's share of major party vote	Correlation Coefficient	-.088	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.560	.
		N	46	46

Table 9: Correlation between proportion of population Methodist and Labour's share of major party vote

			% Methodist	Labour's share of major party vote
Spearman's rho	% Methodist	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.297
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.045
		N	46	46
	Labour's share of major party vote	Correlation Coefficient	-.297	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.045	.
		N	46	46

Table 10: Dwelling tenure in ten provincial town electorates 1926-1961

Electorate	Tenure	1926	1936	1945	1951	1956	1961
Gisborne	Renting	43.6%	52.1%	44.1%	33.7%	27.1%	25.8%
	Mortgage	42.4%	33.8%	30.3%	30.6%	36.2%	39.1%
	Freehold	10.6%	10.5%	22.7%	31.8%	33.2%	31.4%
	Other	3.4%	3.6%	2.9%	3.9%	3.5%	3.7%
Hamilton	Renting	41.4%	57.4%	48.9%	39.9%	29.1%	27.5%
	Mortgage	46.8%	29.8%	28.6%	31.3%	40.5%	44.1%
	Freehold	9.5%	9.5%	20.2%	26.0%	27.5%	25.9%
	Other	2.3%	3.4%	2.3%	2.8%	3.0%	2.5%
Hastings	Renting	35.2%	48.5%	43.1%	33.7%	23.2%	22.9%
	Mortgage	43.6%	33.8%	32.8%	35.8%	42.4%	43.7%
	Freehold	17.6%	13.7%	22.0%	28.2%	31.2%	29.9%
	Other	3.6%	4.0%	2.2%	2.4%	3.2%	3.5%
Invercargill	Renting	23.5%	33.0%	22.9%	18.1%	14.8%	16.1%
	Mortgage	50.8%	43.5%	49.2%	48.5%	50.2%	50.4%
	Freehold	22.8%	18.9%	25.4%	30.7%	32.4%	30.9%
	Other	2.9%	4.5%	2.5%	2.7%	2.6%	2.6%
Napier	Renting	42.9%	52.6%	47.6%	40.6%	29.5%	26.5%
	Mortgage	37.6%	28.7%	28.1%	30.3%	40.3%	44.0%
	Freehold	15.9%	14.0%	22.2%	26.3%	27.3%	27.2%
	Other	3.6%	4.7%	2.1%	2.8%	3.0%	2.3%
Nelson	Renting	25.9%	33.7%	32.8%	27.5%	21.9%	19.4%
	Mortgage	42.2%	38.1%	34.7%	37.3%	43.6%	45.7%
	Freehold	27.5%	23.6%	29.6%	32.4%	31.9%	32.5%
	Other	4.4%	4.7%	2.9%	2.7%	2.6%	2.5%
New Plymouth	Renting	31.2%	45.3%	39.8%	32.8%	24.9%	23.4%
	Mortgage	42.6%	31.0%	28.0%	29.9%	36.7%	41.0%
	Freehold	23.1%	19.4%	29.5%	34.3%	35.1%	32.8%
	Other	3.1%	4.3%	2.7%	3.1%	3.4%	2.8%
Palmerston North	Renting	36.7%	48.7%	44.6%	39.8%	32.6%	31.5%
	Mortgage	44.1%	33.7%	31.7%	31.2%	38.3%	40.0%
	Freehold	16.1%	13.7%	21.7%	26.3%	26.1%	25.9%
	Other	3.1%	3.9%	2.1%	2.7%	3.0%	2.6%
Timaru	Renting	30.8%	41.3%	34.5%	30.8%	25.0%	22.6%
	Mortgage	41.7%	34.1%	35.2%	34.3%	38.0%	40.3%
	Freehold	24.1%	20.4%	27.4%	31.7%	34.0%	34.0%
	Other	3.5%	4.2%	2.9%	3.2%	3.0%	3.1%
Wanganui	Renting	36.7%	52.5%	42.8%	33.2%	24.7%	23.7%
	Mortgage	44.6%	28.3%	27.7%	30.6%	36.7%	40.2%
	Freehold	15.9%	14.9%	26.9%	33.3%	35.2%	32.9%
	Other	2.8%	4.3%	2.5%	2.8%	3.4%	3.3%

Table 11: Correlation between proportion of dwellings rented and Labour's share of major party vote

			% Households rented	Labour's share of major party vote
Spearman's rho	% Households rented	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.325
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.027
		N	46	46
	Labour's share of major party vote	Correlation Coefficient	.325	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.027	
		N	46	46



Table 12: Correlation between proportion of dwellings mortgaged and Labour's share of major party vote

			% Households mortgaged	Labour's share of major party vote
Spearman's rho	% Households mortgaged	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.252
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.091
		N	46	46
	Labour's share of major party vote	Correlation Coefficient	-.252	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.091	.
		N	46	46

Table 13: Correlation between proportion of dwellings freehold unencumbered and Labour's share of major party vote

			% Households freehold	Labour's share of major party vote
Spearman's rho	% Households freehold	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.268
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.071
		N	46	46
	Labour's share of major party vote	Correlation Coefficient	-.268	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.071	.
		N	46	46

Table 14: Correlation between combined proportion of dwellings mortgaged and freehold unencumbered and Labour's share of major party vote

			Combined % mortgaged and freehold	Labour's share of major party vote
Spearman's rho	Combined % mortgaged and freehold	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.336
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.023
		N	46	46
	Labour's share of major party vote	Correlation Coefficient	-.336	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.023	.
		N	46	46

\* Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

## Appendix Four: Support for major parties in Timaru 1922-1960

